

.

I LOST MY ENGLISH ACCENT

.

*I Lost My
English Accent*

By C. V. R. THOMPSON

G · P · PUTNAM'S SONS
New York

COPYRIGHT, 1939, BY C. V. R. THOMPSON

All rights reserved. This book or parts thereof, must not be reproduced in any form without permission.

Ninth Impression

Manufactured in the United States of America

Van Rees Press, New York

To
My Wife

CHAPTER I

THE MIST cheated me of my farewell.

As I leaned against the cold bulwarks of the *Majestic* and prepared sorrowfully to watch my England fade into a green slash across the horizon, the mist—like an anesthetic—rolled up and numbed my senses, and all I could see was water. Dark, unfriendly water.

I was glad in a way. While I was still in smoky, musty London, I had longed to be away, to breathe the life-giving oxygen of a more exciting land, to find adventure, speed, newness. But now, as I drew away from the cliffs of England, I, like every Englishman in such circumstances, felt sudden regret.

I had always despised those people who make a dash for the writing room the moment they embark. But in those moments I think I understood them. Because I had the sudden urge to write: to write to a neighbor, a friend in the office, my bank manager, even my income tax collector. I wanted desperately to retain a feeling of contact with that small circle from which I was withdrawing; and, as I scrawled a few meaningless sentences, I had a definite sensation of piling a little warm solid earth upon the torn and suddenly exposed roots of a lifetime.

Cherbourg looked as friendly as a discarded mistress. The

4 *I Lost My English Accent*

sky was brassy, the buildings cold and severe. It was a relief to see the charred funnels of the burned liner, *L'Atlantique*, spoiling the perfect symmetry of the horizon. It was more than a relief to me, for it sent my thoughts away from misgivings and homesickness chasing after a memory.

It was a memory of those funnels, vomiting smoke and flames then, a few hundred feet beneath the open single-engined plane in which I had flown to get an eye-witness story for my paper of the blazing, crippled liner. And a memory of the pilot shouting back to me over his shoulder: "Be all right if the spark plug goes on the blink now, eh?"

Then I watched the tender that bobbed like a fat duck at the liner's side. *Matelots* were carrying little wooden boxes of gold into the *Majestic's* belly. Gold for America. Coals for Newcastle, I thought. Fancy America wanting more gold. But then, I thought, gold is America's touchstone. She measures everything—art, literature, churches, women, even greatness—by its worth in gold. By that token, then, she must be pretty conceited about herself. All over the world men probe into the earth's innards for gold, but eventually America seems to get all of it. And what does she do with it? Why, she stuffs it all—all, that is, that her citizens do not cram into their teeth—back into the earth's innards for safekeeping.

The *matelots* shouted to their captain. The captain shouted back to the *matelots*. I couldn't understand what they were saying, but I gathered that the *matelots* thought the captain was all wrong, and the captain thought the *matelots* were all wrong. The argument ended with the captain shrugging his shoulders and walking off to his wheelhouse in a huff.

At last the *Majestic* had swallowed her last little wooden

box. Still arguing, the captain and crew untied the tender. She drew away from her parent ship, dragging in her umbilical hawsers after her. With great business she made for the cold, severe city on the horizon. There was a rumble in the *Majestic's* belly. We moved through the slimy water. And presently our last link with Europe had gone.

While I watched Europe disappear, I gave serious thought for the first time to this new world for which I was heading.

Everything had happened so quickly until now that I had no time for reflection. A week before, I had been shackled to a desk. True, it was the desk of the assistant news editor of one of the world's greatest newspapers. But it was not the ultimate by any means in my ambitions. Then one May morning in 1933 came the summons to Stornoway.

To a member of the staff of the *Daily Express* a summons to Stornoway is always important. It may sometimes mean promotion, sometimes dismissal. It may sometimes mean praise, sometimes emphatic condemnation. It may sometimes mean nothing at all as far as you can judge. But it is always important because Stornoway is the London home—and office—of Lord Beaverbrook, diminutive but puissant proprietor of the *Daily Express*.

Lord Beaverbrook came in from the garden. He dropped his topcoat in the middle of the floor, and shook my hand. His eyes twinkled. Can't be the sack, I thought. That was all the thinking I did. For the next ten minutes I had all I could do to answer the questions which came with the delivery of a trap-drummer in a swing band. There was an awkward silence then, and I fiddled with my necktie, scratched the tip of my nose, and twisted my ring.

6 *I Lost My English Accent*

"How'd you like to go to America for us?" said Lord Beaverbrook, with such suddenness that it seemed as if the idea had just occurred to him.

"I'd love it, sir," I stammered; and before I had added something more adequate from my disordered thoughts, Lord Beaverbrook was on the telephone to the *Daily Express* office. To Arthur Christiansen, so baby-faced, so curly-haired, he did not seem nearly old enough to be the brilliant editor he is, Lord Beaverbrook announced his decision to send me to America.

Then he shook my hand, and led me to the door. "Don't forget," he said at the threshold, "that I never back a losing horse."

Then a week of hastened preparing. Passports, visas, farewells. A week of warnings and a week of advice. "You must always dress well in front of Americans." Unhappily aware of my sloppiness, I ordered two dozen shirts from Jack Izod, haberdasher to the Prince of Wales, without knowing when I would be able to pay for them. "Take plenty of suits with you because you can't buy a decent suit in New York." "Be prepared to be laughed at by New Yorkers—they can't stand Englishmen." "Never forget to stand up for England—they'll respect you for it." "Better get a gun." "Try and make a grand entrance, because, if you go into New York with a big splash, they'll remember you." "Hope you go into New York by night, because it looks wonderful then, but it's not worth seeing in daylight."

Then a day of more concentrated farewells. A proud moment when a gold fountain pen was thrust into my hand "as a good luck token from the reporters." A train journey to

Southampton. More farewells. And now misgivings. I felt very much as I felt eight years before on my first day in a newspaper office....

The news editor, whose lips were yellow from the cigarette that always drooped from them, called me over to his desk, and gave me an auctioneer's announcement of the sale of the Old Surrey Theatre. I hadn't the courage to say I had never heard of it; but, apparently, it was once quite a famous old place. Irving and Tree had played there, long before Blackfriars became a slum instead of the center of intellectual London. "Get a good human story," said the news editor.

The doors of the Old Surrey were locked. A poster advertising a Mary Pickford film—last concession of the Old Surrey to a changing world—was covered with a bill advertising the theater's sale. A wooden barrier blocked my way to the stage entrance. It never occurred to me to climb the barrier. An ordinary law-abiding Englishman would hardly enter his own home if someone pinned a notice forbidding him to do so on the front door. Had it occurred to me, I wouldn't have climbed the barrier, because I would have been afraid someone would ask me what I thought I was doing. A workman came along the alley. I started toward him to ask him some questions, but my shyness pulled me back. I went back to the office and wrote a miserable story. It went into the wastepaper basket.

Next morning there was an envelope for me. In it was a story about the Old Surrey Theatre from an opposition newspaper. It was a grand story: workmen playing poker in the greenroom where Tree and Irving used to sit, an interview with a stage-door man who knew Ellen Terry by her first name, wigs that once crowned the heads of the theater's roy-

8 *I Lost My English Accent*

alty trampled by the hobnailed boots of the wreckers, and so forth. I did not hold up my head again for a week.

I asked myself if I would climb over the barrier this time. Yes, I would. I would find a new courage in this new and more outspoken world. I would be as pushing as I believed Americans were. I suddenly felt hungry. And then I felt a fear I always felt facing my unknown table companions on the first night at sea. I reached toward the bell to tell the steward to bring me dinner in my cabin. But I restrained myself. I must start climbing over the barrier right now. I would go to the dining saloon and meet my first Americans.

But that was not the real reason I had dinner in the dining saloon. The real reason was that I was afraid the steward might think it unusual if I ordered dinner in my cabin.

There were three Americans at my table. I felt like a block of ice in the middle of three camp fires. They were so friendly I thought they had been brought up together, but they had never met until ten minutes before.

I had not met many Americans, but I had a very definite picture of my typical American.

His face was long and lean. His cheeks were creased like the skin of a rather green baked apple. His arms and legs were thick and muscular from playing golf before breakfast, after luncheon, and during most of dinner. His body was upright, but a little paunchy from worrying about the good things he couldn't eat. His eyes, not necessarily obscured by the traditional horn-rimmed spectacles, squinted from watching if the fellow next to him was getting a little further ahead than he. His hair was a theatrical gray, because he was flat-



"I felt like a block of ice in the middle of three campfires."

tered to think other people were thinking that he was prematurely gray.

He talked rapidly with the voice of a radio announcer chewing sandpaper. He seldom argued, and he never listened. He had never heard of Constable or Tennyson. But he was an authority on Rembrandts because they cost a million dollars, on Bernard Shaw because he knew more about ballyhoo than any American, on Whistler because his portrait of his mother was used for a postage stamp.

He preferred blondes, particularly when tired. He never had his nails manicured without making an assignation with the manicurist. He had a plump and opulent wife.

He was something in Wall Street, something in Chicago, or just something in pork. The dollar was his god. It would bring Buckingham Palace brick by brick to Zilmerville, Wisconsin. It would buy him anything from a pound of imported cheese to a free pardon for committing murder. Women or horses. Apartments or continents.

A costly suit was necessarily a good suit, even if it was a vulgar check—which it usually was. An expensive movie was essentially a great movie. And an extravagant wife was necessarily the best little wife in all Wisconsin.

He was always beating the big drum. His hometown might be a fleck on the map, but it was *the* most thriving, *the* most progressive, *the* most stupendous little town in the world. By the same token, America was God's own country. It ruled the world. Of course, it won the War, but it also won the peace. "Why, we in America wouldn't stand for conditions like these in England," he would say. "There are 2,341 millionaires in America. America is the land of opportunity, the land of prog-

ress, the land of wealth. Why, the gold in America stretched end to end would . . .”

Always the Dollar, the most-used word in the American language, the Almighty God, Dollar.

In other words, my typical American was, to borrow his own vernacular, a pretty average pain in the neck.

I was delighted with the Californian at my table. He seemed to match so perfectly the subject of my preconceived portrait. The only difference was that where my Average American would use the word dollar, my Californian used the word California.

But his face was long and lean, his cheeks creased. He talked all through one course about his game of golf at St. Andrew's. He pecked at his food, and I had the definite impression he would have preferred a tin of sodium bicarbonate. He bragged about his home state. “There's no place like it in the world. Paradise on earth. Once you've been there you never want to leave.” But I found that it wasn't business that had kept him on the French Riviera all winter.

He was apparently something in wheat. He bragged about all the wheat he had, about the millions he would have made if the Depression had not brought down the price of wheat. Over coffee he announced that America had won the War, that there never would have been any war if England had not come in too late. He squelched my one attempt to enter the conversation by his obvious compassion for me because I was making my first transatlantic crossing.

After dinner I saw him with the only blonde on board, and I learned later that he made a great impression on her because

he pretended he was one of the survivors of the *Titanic* disaster.

Just as I had decided that my opinions of Americans were painfully accurate, my decisions were completely upset by the other two Americans at the table.

They had at first seemed so friendly with the Californian that I had automatically classed them with him. But on the second day out, one of them, short and dark, with what the advertisements call a perpetual five o'clock shadow, turned on the Californian during one of his interminable lectures on the beauties of his home state. He was quite insulting, but I didn't find out how insulting until a long time after. I didn't know then that the worst thing you can say to a Californian is to tell him how much you like Florida.

Grateful to my neighbor, I studied him more closely, and I found that he did not fit into my picture at all. He was a traveling salesman—in steel rails, I believe. He did not play golf. In fact, he didn't give a hang for athletics of any kind. He didn't boast about his home town; I actually had to ask him before I discovered he was a New Yorker. He didn't talk unless he had something to say—and that was usually interesting. He knew a great deal more about the European situation than I did. And he didn't seem to care much whether America had won the War or not.

He ate heartily of what he wanted without doing any mental arithmetic about the calories in the dishes he ordered. He was kindly and helpful. He whispered a warning to me when in a spirit of ignorant adventure I ordered from the American menu two strangely named dishes, each of which was a meal in itself. In only one respect did he conform with my idea of

an American. When he ordered oysters—which was at nearly every meal—he always asked for “ersters.”

The third American was different again. In spite of his blue evening clothes and his baldish head, he looked more like a figure out of a Dutch Old Master than an American. Perhaps that was because he really was a Dutchman. He called himself an American, of course, and he *was* an American citizen, but a century back his ancestors had tended a windmill in Holland. “But that was a century ago,” he said, rather testily, when I explained that I would consider him a Dutchman, “and my folks have lived in Philadelphia for three generations.” A little exasperated at his stubbornness, I tried to make him see that a century is only a hundred years. But he wouldn’t listen. To him—as to nearly all Americans, it seems a century is a whole era in the world’s history.

When I wasn’t making friends with my New Yorker and arguing about time with my Dutchman, I spent most of the voyage with the cardsharpers.

In England we do not have many opportunities to meet crooks socially, and so we have a certain whimsical envy of America for her gangsters and large-scale crooks. There is no romance in the English crook. He is usually a mean, dull-witted fellow, who doesn’t even have the sense to make a house plan before committing a burglary. And so for an Englishman there is romance in the American gangster. That is why one of the London newspapers appointed its crime reporter New York correspondent. That is why the average reader of an English newspaper thinks he would need a gun in New York if he went to buy a pound of spinach.

Dr. Leonard Woods, the ship’s surgeon, introduced me to



"The average reader of an English newspaper thinks he would need a gun in New York if he went to buy a pound of spinach."

the cardsharpers. They were not together when I met them. They never are.

You would never suspect them. One of them looked—and talked—like a retired banker. His hair was silvery, his complexion a delicate pink. As he sipped a champagne cocktail with the relish of a connoisseur, he spoke ably and quietly about the new President of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Another one, who was drinking ginger ale in the smoke room when I met him, might have been a Congregational minister. During the whole voyage, he wore a black jacket, pepper-and-salt trousers, and patent leather shoes. Had he asked me if I would like a game of cards, I am sure I would have thought him the most broadminded nonconformist I had ever met.

There was one younger man. He had the ruddy complexion of an outdoors man. He was a hearty fellow who, you would say, had something to do with gold mines. That was just the impression he was intended to give.

I don't know whether I didn't look rich or didn't look a gambler, but none of the trio ever indicated to me in all our conversations that they had any idea that poker ever meant anything but an instrument for stirring a smoldering fire.

"We're passing Ambrose," said Fitz, the steward, as he took away my empty coffee cup.

Ambrose is a lightship which tells you, just in case you don't know, that the next stop is New York. It is a sort of Atlantic Clapham Junction. There is something rednosed, prosperous, and jovial about the name. So much less formidable than

Needles or Bishop's Rock. But the ship itself had none of the cheery warmth I looked for. If there was any, it was completely smothered by a blanket of heavy mist.

Then the *Majestic* slowed down. I had an almost instantaneous feeling of turning into an alien. The Americans on board were no longer our guests. They suddenly seemed to own the whole ship.

Quarantine. I was now a complete alien. An alien who had sworn I was not an anarchist, nor a believer in the overthrow of the United States Government, nor a polygamist. And I had fifty dollars, so I was free to enter. But I kept thinking about Quarantine. I could not quite banish from my thoughts the feeling that I would be taken off the ship, squirted with disinfectant, and locked in a cage for a probationary period while inspectors watched for foam to appear at the sides of my mouth. It was a ridiculous thought, because I knew that the American doctor nearly always passed the ship. But one has thoughts like that at important moments in one's life.

Then the American press came on board. I had been expecting them with some foreboding, and yet also with some anticipation. This was my opportunity to make that grand entrance, that big splash that I had been told was so essential. Furthermore, I had been told that the reporters in New York interviewed every arrival. I went over my little statement about war debts again, found I was word perfect, and took up my stand by the purser's office until my name was called. It was never called, of course, but I did not find out for some time that I need not have felt so downcast, that American reporters are just like reporters anywhere else. They interview people who make news, not those who write about it.

The Statue of Liberty. I turned away from its moldy greenness to my traveling salesman friend. "Let's go and celebrate this moment," I said, excitedly. "Come and have a drink." He smiled and shook his head. "Impossible," he said. "We're within the three-mile limit now. Prohibition, you know." The Statue of Liberty! I wanted to thumb my nose at the jade.

New York was invisible. The mist again. Ferryboats, screeching like night owls in pain, passed across our bow. Such antiquated vessels. I had seen boats just like them in movie dramas of the early days on the Mississippi. I had never expected to see them in modern, efficient New York.

There was a break in the mist. Above a bank of grayness rose the tops of New York's skyscrapers. There was nothing real about the scene. It was more like a wildly imaginative illustration to a fairy tale. The buildings looked like the slashes of a willful giant who had wielded his great ax through the gray sky. Had I not heard such worldly voices—voices saying "It's good to be back in N'York"; "I wonder if they'll bring Junior to meet us"; "I'm not going to declare that frock I bought in Paris"—I am sure I wouldn't have believed that I was awake.

In a few moments New York had dropped her magic cloak. The mist rolled away and left the city naked. Her immodesty did not become her so well. The clumps of skyscrapers were still magnificent, but, like giants of a great forest, their roots were covered with an unsightly undergrowth of small, dirty buildings, of garish electric signs, of ugly overhead railways.

When the *Majestic* came alongside, I went down to my cabin. "You must always dress well in front of Americans." I

put on a brand new shirt, brushed my suit, tidied my hair. Satisfied, I went ashore.

There was noise everywhere. Porters were yelling. Passengers were yelling. Passengers' friends were yelling. There was bustle everywhere. This was the New York I had been expecting. People were hurrying as if on a mission of urgent mercy, and yet it seemed to take them twice as long to get off the pier as it would have in slow, lazy England.

While I was looking for my shipboard friends to receive their assurances once more that I must telephone them, Dr. Woods tapped me on the shoulder. "There is a newspaper man here who wants to talk to you," he said. And he introduced me to Skipper Williams, of the *New York Times*. "If you go into New York with a big splash they will remember you." I had forgotten all about my war debts statement, but I made myself ready to give the *New York Times* my all.

"You'll be here a few weeks, I suppose," grunted Skipper. A bit puzzled, I told him I hoped to be staying some time. "Anything particular you're going to study?" grunted Skipper again. "Just America generally," I answered. "Well, have a good time," grunted Skipper again, and he shamled off.

I couldn't see a big splash in that interview, but I looked carefully at every page of the *New York Times* next day. It took me a couple of hours. But there was no interview. The reason was that Skipper Williams had thought I was a Rhodes Scholar.

At last my luggage was piled into a taxicab. A group of the roughest looking men I had ever seen stood around the door. "Better get a gun." I tipped them. They didn't thank me, so I presumed I hadn't given them enough. The cab moved off.

From the corner of his mouth, the driver said something. I couldn't hear him. "I beg your pardon," I said. "Where to, doc?" he asked. I told him to drive to the Warwick Hotel. He stopped the cab. "Better get a gun." But he was quite friendly. "Where's that, doc?" he asked. I had no idea. "It's quite a large hotel," I said. "Never heard of it, doc," said the driver.

He pulled out a little red book. "How d'yer spell it, doc?" he asked. I spelled it. And then he laughed. "Oh that's the Wore-wick," he said. "Not the Worrick." And he laughed and laughed.

"Be prepared to be laughed at by New Yorkers—they can't stand Englishmen...."

CHAPTER II

IN ENGLAND, Broadway is famed in song and story.

I mean, every song writer—even if he is English—moans about his Broadway baby, and somehow the impression is around that there is not a building along the Great White Way less than a hundred stories high. On each of those stories, of course, is an unrecognized genius pounding out the chorus of a theme song on an old piano, while his own masterpiece lies unheeded in his employer's wastepaper basket; and in the next room a pretty little girl from Main Street is fighting off a fate worse than death, while she tries to earn an honest living dancing in the back line.

The movies are to blame for it. They are to blame for a lot of disappointments in New York. It all looks so much better in the movies. You see the tall, high buildings, and you don't see the dirty little brownstone houses, with the ragged washing hanging out their windows. You see New York's smart exterior without seeing her shabby underwear.

I made the mistake of going to Broadway in daylight. Broadway is a lady of the evening. In the sunlight she looks like a suddenly awakened chorus girl who went to bed with her make-up on. Her buildings, covered with the unlighted framework of a thousand electric signs, look like a set-piece of fireworks after the fireworks have gone off. Her shops are



"Everyone who doesn't look like a pickpocket looks like a plain-

tawdry. Her gilt and marble movie palaces look slightly second-hand. Even her people are commonplace. Everyone who doesn't look like a pickpocket looks like a plainclothes detective searching for a pickpocket.

There is cheapness and vulgarity everywhere, all masquerading under Broadway's favorite word, showmanship.

There is even showmanship about the restaurants. Chinese girls in pink frocks stand in the restaurant windows stirring great bowls of steaming spaghetti. As though they were the front line of a chorus, halfbaked hams and chickens spin interminably on automatic spits. Endless cascades of doughnuts are spewed from the mouth of a hideous frying machine onto a little railway which carries them straight to the customers' plates. Even plain, virginal orange juice is served from a stand transformed into Florenz Ziegfeld's idea of a tropical grove.

The ties displayed in the nasty little haberdashers' shops seem as if they were made from sliced spumoni. The gramophone records blaring from the nasty little music shops remind me of the outside of a Barcelona brothel. The black lace underwear in the nasty little women's shops remind me of the inside of a Barcelona brothel.

And then suddenly it is dark. Broadway turns into a glamorous showgirl. Broadway the beautiful, Broadway the magnificent. Her electric signs are dazzling. The Chinese girls, the revolving hams and chickens, Ziegfeld's tropical orange grove all at once seem to be exactly right. You would be annoyed if you saw anything but the spumoni ties and the black lace underwear. The gilt and marble movie palaces become works of art. And even the pickpockets look like

glamorous gangsters, the detectives like breathtaking G-men. Broadway, then, is the most exciting street in the world.

Excitement always makes me feel hungry, and so on my first evening on Broadway I looked for somewhere to eat. I resisted the showmanship of the shop fronts, and went into a large barn of a place, which attracted me because it was empty. The waiter brought me a menu half a yard long. The only dish with which I was really familiar was roast beef. But I wasn't familiar with the kind of roast beef he brought me. It was cut nearly a quarter of an inch thick. I have never again had roast beef in America unless I could carve it myself. But there was worse sacrilege afterward. I ordered a pot of tea. There was a piece of string hanging out under the lid. I told the waiter to take it back. He looked surprised, so I took the lid off. I pulled the string, and there at the end of it was a horrible, soggy calico bag, and in that bag were precious tea leaves. Roast beef a quarter of an inch thick! And tea in little bags! I wondered what kind of a barbarian country this America was.

After dinner I went to a burlesque show. Even the darkness and Broadway's lights didn't save that theater from looking second-rate. I could sense it immediately, because as I bought my ticket I looked round sheepishly to make sure nobody was watching me. Then I cut my way into the auditorium through a curtain of smoke.

A girl was strolling up and down the stage, singing. It was the worst singing I had ever heard. The audience seemed to agree. But when she finished her song, they applauded her as if she had been Melba. The lights were lowered, and the girl resumed her strolling. Very deliberately she took a pin out

of the upper part of her dress, and dropped it with unfailing aim on the drummer's cymbal. Then another. Then another. Finally she exposed, with, I thought, undue pride, a rather overdeveloped breast. There was more applause. I began to understand. At the fourth encore I was clapping too. She was practically naked.

Later I discovered this was all a great American art. In a tabloid newspaper I read that an overzealous policeman had raided one of the burlesque shows and charged its producers and performers with corrupting the public morals. The defense had been the usual one. The feminine form is beautiful, said the producer, and his tableaux—that is what he called them—were, therefore, art. The magistrate agreed with him. The policeman retired in blushing confusion. And the tabloid announced that at the next performance “more than five hundred art lovers attended.”

I could not leave Broadway. It was early in the morning but I was under Broadway's spell. I watched the tired, blasé professional dancing partners come out of their ten cent palaces and walk away with the short, ferrety little boy friends who had been waiting for them. I saw the midgets from a side show climbing onto the tall stools of a soda fountain to sip an ice cream soda. I watched men dodging in and out of Times Square's traffic to catch up with an unattended girl. And then I walked up Broadway.

I must have walked an hour. I don't know what I was looking for. Probably for Harlem. I left far behind me the glitter and tinsel of real Broadway. Now it was just another bedraggled street. I felt frightened. The sleek, fast, black cars that I associated—again through movies—with gangsters were

flashing past. Perhaps there would be some shooting, I thought, and then I upbraided myself for the idea. That's England's conception of New York, I said to myself, but you know that doesn't really happen. Suddenly there was a sharp report in the distance. Two or three more. I looked in the direction of the sounds. Everyone seemed perfectly calm. It must have been a punctured tire.

But a noise like that when you are half expecting—in spite of yourself—to be confronted suddenly with a gun battle, is unnerving. For a fortnight afterward I flinched every time I heard a loud noise in the street. I hailed a taxicab, and with extra care asked the driver to take me to the Wore-wick Hotel.

Next morning I was reading the *New York Times* when I saw a headline about a gun battle in New York. Gangsters riding in three sleek, fast, black cars had fought with their guns to settle a quarrel among them. Three bystanders, one of them a woman, had been shot by ricocheting bullets. The time was early that morning. The place was upper Broadway.

It *was* a punctured tire that I heard, but it need not have been.

A bellboy rang at my door, and handed me a package. There was a note with it. "Welcome," it said, "I've just run up the enclosed in my bathtub. I am downstairs when you are through with breakfast." It was signed "Dixie Tighe."

I had an introduction to Miss Tighe. She had been described to me as one of the best of America's newspaper women. She had intended to meet me at the dock, but she was out on a murder story.

I opened the package. There was a medicine bottle filled with a green liquid. It looked and smelled like *crème de menthe*. But it didn't taste like it. It tasted like nothing on earth. But I pretended I liked it, because, apparently, it was the most friendly act in America to give away a bottle of your own bathtub brew.

It was with some trepidation that I went to meet Miss Tighe. Back at home I was always shy of meeting girls for the first time, and I had heard a lot about American girls. But I was at ease with her a few minutes after I had seen her flaming red hair and her dark green eyes. With her I did not have to think up the small talk about movies and shows that English girls want to hear. In a few moments she had told me what I wanted most to know at that time—that Roosevelt was a smashing success, that I had better get some thinner clothes because the hot weather was coming, that I would never get my shoes cleaned if I left them outside the hotel room door, that I should tip a taxi driver ten cents, that she could get me all the *crème de menthe*—or gin—that I wanted.

For luncheon we went to a speakeasy. It was my first speakeasy. It was in the basement of a private house. I rang a bell, and presently the long, sour face of a waiter looked through the grille in the upper part of the oak door. "What you want?" he asked, with a heavy Italian accent. Then he saw Miss Tighe, and the face became shorter and less sour. "Oh yes, Miss Tighe," he said. "Come on in."

The place was as dark as a cellar. There were a few tables covered with red and white gingham tablecloths, but everyone was standing at the bar. Several of them were drunk.

Gus, the proprietor, asked my wishes. I asked for two

whiskies and soda. "Scotch, you mean, I s'pose," he said, and without waiting for an answer he went about the ritual of filling two glasses with ice and soda water. Then he filled a smaller glass from an enormous bottle labeled something like "Scotch Nectar." It may have been nectar, but it was definitely not Scotch. I could drink a quart of whisky without turning a hair in London, but three of Gus's Scotches made me absurdly tight.

I paid the bill, and slipped a tip under the plate for the waiter. As we went out, his face was longer and more sour than ever. Miss Tighe turned back at the door and said something to him. When we were out in the street, she laughed. "You left him a nickel tip," she said. A nickel. Twopence halfpenny. It was no good trying to explain that in England we left tips like that in a place of that sort. So I just blushed like a virgin in a waterfront café, and pretended I was still confused by the money.

When the New Yorker sets about showing his visitor the sights of his city, he should abandon the method of the Londoner. New York has no Westminster Abbey, no Tower of London, no St. Paul's Cathedral, no Horseguards' Parade. No Englishman wants to see Grant's Tomb. It is not a particularly beautiful tomb, and none but the most erudite foreigner has ever heard of the general who rests there. The cathedrals to our way of thinking are not much larger than parish churches. And even the skyscrapers get a little boring after you have seen the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building, and Rockefeller City.

Miss Tighe had a better method. I was much more interested to see the hotel where Arnold Rothstein, the gam-

bler, was shot than St. Patrick's Cathedral. I was much more interested in seeing a speakeasy whose proprietor had blue-penciled across a notice announcing his premises had been closed for violation of the Prohibition Act, "Open for Business Upstairs," than in paying a week's salary for a plate of asparagus so I could watch the eating habits of the elite at the swank Colony restaurant. And I was very much more interested in hearing a cop, presumably a guardian of the law, neglect Fifth Avenue's traffic while he told a friend a new recipe for the home manufacture of gin than in meeting the secretary of the Chamber of Commerce. I saw St. Patrick's Cathedral on that fascinating tour of New York, but only because we happened to be outside when it began to rain.

I was invited that evening for dinner in a private home. I was told that was a sign my hostess liked me. Apparently, an American, naturally so hospitable that he gives up his whole day to a visitor, will take him to any restaurant, speakeasy, or nightclub in New York. But he doesn't invite him to his home until he is sure his visitor is one of his kind.

A taxicab took me there. It was no ordinary taxicab. There was a little compartment in the partition that divides the driver from the passenger, and in it I saw a book and a small package. The book was a dictionary, and the small package contained a needle and thread. The driver was used to his passengers' making the discovery, for over his shoulder he said: "Wondering what they're for, eh, cap'?" I admitted I was. The driver explained.

"You see, cap'," he said. "I'm a bit of a philosopher, you might say. And I've noticed that, whenever a lady steps into a cab, it's nearly always because she's gotten a run in her

stockings. So there's the needle and thread for her. And the dictionary. Well, you know, cap', that, whenever two men get in an argument, there's nearly always a discussion about some word or other. So the dictionary's there to help them settle it. Just a little bit of service, cap'."

A maid—colored, of course—opened the door. She would not have come to the door normally, but I was not familiar with the automatic gadget by which the householder can admit guests through the communal front door of the apartment house by a sort of remote control. I rang the bell, and did not think to try the door when the intermittent clicking, which discloses that the way is clear, began. I just rang again, and so the maid had to come after me.

She was trim enough, but wore no cap like English maids. It seems that in a democratic country like America that is too much to ask a servant. She led me into the right apartment. Then she turned to me and said: "Will yo' rest yo' wraps, Mr. Thompson?" I had no idea what she meant. It was not until she looked rather fixedly at my overcoat that I knew she wanted to hang up my street clothes.

My hostess, Dorothy Roe, introduced me to the other guests. They all said: "Glad to meet you, Mr. Thompson," which, I believe, is the depth of bad form at home, but in perfect taste in New York. Bad form or not, I must say they took the trouble to listen for my name, to pronounce it correctly, and to remember it. And I could not think of the number of times in England that I have been called Tomkins, Thomas, or just Mr. Er—er—er, five minutes after being introduced.

There was a drink in my hand almost before I had found a chair. It was a sign of inattentiveness, it appeared, if the host

did not busy himself about the preparation of a drink a minute or two after a guest's arrival. There was an almost indecent haste about everything to do with drinking in this country which was supposed not to drink. A man would finish his drink before I, with my more leisured English way of drinking, had got its rather doubtful bouquet. That haste was explained to me. The American consumed his alcohol quickly because drink was expensive and he wanted to get the maximum effect of his bootlegged gaiety as quickly as possible. I had my own idea. He drank quickly because the stuff tasted so beastly.

I had what I believed was a normal home-cooked meal. Tomato juice first. In England tomato juice was used almost exclusively to sober up the unwise drinker. I wasn't surprised therefore to discover that tomato juice was often the American's first course. Then a hamburger, a steak which did not seem to have been improved by needless torturing by the butcher.

At this point I noticed that I was being watched. I was self-conscious at once. I looked surreptitiously to see if a lima bean had lodged conspicuously on my necktie. No. So I followed the direction of the polite but curious glances, and found they were all watching my knife and fork. My English table manners were strange to them. For once in my life I decided they would have to keep on watching me. I was not enough of a gymnast to adopt in twenty-four hours the American way of eating. In fact, I have not been able to adopt it yet.

It is the most complicated way of eating contrived since man gave up using his fingers. The food is cut up and generally assembled in the ordinary way with the fork in the

left hand and the knife in the right hand. But when that operation is completed, the knife is laid delicately on the plate. With the dexterity of a juggler the fork is passed from the left hand to the right hand. The little pile of food, be it meat or vegetables, or both, is then shoveled up with the fork and conveyed to the mouth. Then the fork goes back with still more exquisite sleight of hand to repeat the cutting and assembling operation.

For an efficient nation like America that all seems a terrible waste of effort, even if it does satisfy the hunting instinct in all of us, especially with such elusive edibles as peas. I am sure the less spectacular English method of using the fork as a fork, and not as a shovel, is less tiring, if less sporting.

There was a choice of sweets, which I was told to call desert. Ice cream or pie. I said I would like an ice. The hostess said she was sorry there wasn't any, and then handed me a plate of it. I was just going to laugh in the hope that this was some of that famous American "ribbing" I had heard about, when the ever-thoughtful Miss Tighe explained that in New York an ice was a water ice and what I called an ice was ice cream.

With coffee there came more highballs. With highballs came more conversation. With conversation came more highballs. By that time the Scotch tasted much better. I complimented the hostess. She explained that she had bought a better grade specially for me. In case I should want to get some she gave me a price list.

That price list is one of my treasured souvenirs. It was published by one of the scores of little cordial shops, which sold liquor under the pretense that they were selling colored syrups

with no more alcoholic content than a strawberry ice cream soda. The proprietor's frankness was what endeared him to me. At the top of his list was "Genuine Johnny Walker Black Label Scotch—\$4.85." Right underneath that was another item, "Genuine Johnny Walker Black Label Scotch (*Uncut*)—\$7.85."

I went home quite tight. When I reached the hotel I took out my bottle of *crème de menthe*, and had a drink of it. It didn't taste at all bad. I must have been tighter than I thought.

"Oh, you've just been slumming so far," said Dixie Tighe when I thanked her. "You will now take in a slice of the Upper Crust."

I was definitely interested. In my few days in New York I had not quite made up my mind how to separate the Upper Crust from the middle of the pie. In London it was easier. Perhaps a trace of a Cockney accent or a slight hesitancy over an *h*. But there was no Cockney accent in New York, and everyone pronounced a perfect *h*, except for some reason in the word, *herb*, and for three years I thought that was a national joke.

Of course, I realized that some one calls a pearl a *poil* and an oyster an *erster* does not. And I could recognize the *dese*, *dem* and *dose* as a definitely lower stratum. But I had great difficulty in detecting one of the Four Hundred from one of the Four Million who wanted you to believe he or she was really in the neighborhood of No. 5.

I thought I had found a clue when I discovered that an enormous number of New Yorkers say "don't" instead of "doesn't" and "ask" instead of "asked" and "kep" instead of

"kept." But then I heard some who were, as the society columnists put it, born to the purple, speak carelessly and sometimes clumsily. So I came to the conclusion that those who are very careful with "doesn't," "asked," and "kept," pronouncing them so that their mouths looked like a doughnut walking upstairs, were usually the ones who did not belong.

The first lesson in my social education took place at a cocktail party in some hotel on Park Avenue. As far as I was concerned it was not a success. All my careful analyses were hopelessly wrong. These socialites were just like socialites in London. They even spoke with an English accent. So I lost the bravado which the excitement of New York had given me and became completely English again. I stood awkwardly most of the time behind a large grand piano. The only thing about the whole party that interested me was to see the daughter of the President openly violating the law in front of a hundred or more people. I mean she was drinking a cocktail.

The next slice of the Upper Crust involved a visit to the theater. There was nothing exceptional about the theater. It was just as uncomfortable as most London theaters. There was nothing exceptional about the play, except that when the lighting plot called for a sunset across the desert it did look something like a sunset across the desert, instead of an Arabian red light distr:

I soon discovered that I would have to go into training with Jack Dempsey or something. I don't think I was ever very close, but in London when someone asked me out to dinner I always let him pay the bill without a struggle. But here it was different. No matter who invited whom, the arrival of the bill, or check, or whatever it was, provided the gong for

the first round of a new world's heavyweight championship. It was a championship that I could never win.

My final contact with the Upper Crust was an important one. It was carefully explained that for staidness, dignity, and real substantial wealth the country club set could not be bettered. So I was going to spend a week end at the Westchester Country Club. I was advised to take tails.

The club was magnificent. It was a long, low building. Its broad driveways were packed with limousines. There was an outdoor dance floor, and a quiet, dignified band was playing. A hundred polished waiters hovered over a hundred spotless tables. I walked through a lofty lounge to the lift. There was a score of women who exactly matched the atmosphere—smart but quiet. This was the real Upper Crust.

When I had changed in my room I came downstairs to meet my hostess, Mrs. Jane Buck, an official of the club. With charming poise she took us to one of the hundred immaculate tables. A perfect dinner was served to us, a dinner accompanied by perfect wine. An enormous moon rose above the dance floor. The strains of soft music matched exactly the balmy air. And then a waiter whispered something in Mrs. Buck's ear. The spell was broken. Her serene face lost its serenity. She excused herself, and hurried away.

She did not come back for an hour, but it was many hours later that I discovered what kept her.

One of the guests, whom I will call Miss Mary Smith, had eaten too little of the perfect dinner, and drunk too much of the perfect wine. Wandering she knew not where through the club's premises she had come to the kitchen. She walked in and went up to the chef. Of him she demanded a copy of

all his recipes. A chef has his secrets and does not like to disclose them. He refused. So Miss Smith lay down on the kitchen floor, kicked her legs up in the air, screamed, and threatened she would continue until she received her recipes. Mrs. Buck finally persuaded her to go upstairs.

The evening was ended. Tired but contented we made ready to retire. The club was full and I was asked if I would mind changing my room and sharing with another man. I went upstairs to get my clothes. I walked into the room where I had changed, switched on the light, and there in the bed, without a stitch of clothing, was Miss Mary Smith. As I was creeping out with my clothes on one arm and my shoes in my hand, the house detective came by. I almost ran down the corridor.

My roommate and I had just switched off the light, when there was a terrific commotion in the corridor outside. Banging on a door, voices raised in anger, more banging, and then footsteps, hundreds of footsteps. My friend and I went to investigate. It was Mary Smith again.

Just after my hurried retreat from her room, another male guest, who had also consumed too much of that perfect wine, found his way there. He too found out his mistake, but he stayed. The inquisitive detective saw him. He ordered him out. But this time Miss Smith had come to. She would have none of it. In fact, she barricaded the door with the furniture. The detective called for the management. The management tried to talk to Miss Smith, but she refused to listen.

In desperation the management called out the electricians. They went down to the dance floor, turned on the spotlights, which a few hours before had been playing on a much quieter

scene, and shone them on Miss Smith's bedroom window. Those lights drove her out. She was asked to leave the premises, and, bidding a fond farewell to her partner, whom I will call Mr. John Reynolds, she left for an hotel in neighboring Greenwich.

The outraged club went back to its staid, dignified sleep. But Mr. Reynolds did not sleep. Just after he had returned to his room, his telephone rang. It was Mary Smith, announcing she had left behind her purse. Gallantly, Mr. Reynolds offered to take it to her. She thanked him, and asked him to bring it to her hotel, where she had registered as Mrs. John Reynolds. All the way to Greenwich Mr. John Reynolds smiled at her thoughtfulness.

He arrived at the hotel and asked the clerk for the room number of Mrs. John Reynolds.

The clerk looked at him, coldly. "I wouldn't disturb them now, sir," he said. "They've just retired for the night. You see, Mr. Reynolds arrived about quarter of an hour ago."

CHAPTER III

I MET the President of these United States and my first gangster on the same day.

At that time there was no one who would have said that I achieved the second distinction at the same time as the first. Franklin Delano Roosevelt in those days was something of a Messiah.

To a nation bored with a President as starched as his high collars and demoralized by a depression that seemed as bottomless as the proverbial pit, Roosevelt was a fast-operating tonic. Perhaps he was as hard-boiled as Herbert Hoover's collar, but he did smile as if it didn't hurt him. And he did not spend all his time prophesying that prosperity was just around the corner. He went around the corner after it.

Roosevelt had been President for nearly three months when I met him. He had produced the famous Bank Holiday and 3.2 per cent beer, which, by the way, was just 3.2 per cent beer. But no one was quite sure yet what the New Deal was all about. Not even Roosevelt, I suspect. Washington was still waiting for the President to put the cards of the New Deal face up on the table.

The crowd of supposedly tough Washington correspondents were, therefore, nearly as excited as I when press conference time came near. There were about fifty of us gathered at the

executive entrance to the White House in a sort of marble forum that looked more like a public lavatory. If a man with a gun had arrived, I am sure everyone of us would have crouched down and got on his mark. There was more fighting to get to the front of the line than at the sewing circle's weekly bun fight. At last someone must have said "Go," because I was swept forward suddenly in a hundred-yard sprint toward an opened door. Presently, by standing on tiptoe, I could see the President over a score of heads.

There was a round-the-campfire atmosphere about the whole conference. Roosevelt was leaning back in a swivel chair placed behind a desk littered with bric-a-brac. His smile, already famous as the Roosevelt smile, formed the circumference of a circle around a well-bitten cigarette holder. His face was slightly tanned and weather-beaten, like the complexion of the seafaring man he would have liked to have been. He already had his favorites among the correspondents, and he called those by their first names. He made some quite personal pleasantries, and they replied in similar vein, although they did not let down sufficiently to drop the "Mr. President." I was surprised. I expected them to call him Frank.

I didn't care for it at first. I had seen too much of Whitehall. In Whitehall a reporter is taught to look at a minister from the boots up. Their bearing is as stiff as their wing collars. The Prime Minister himself is as untouchable as an oriental joss, and only when a Whitehall reporter feels really informal does he talk about him as the "P.M." When I recalled that it once took me a whole day to obtain a five minutes' chat with not even the Minister of Health but his press



"There was a round-the-campfire atmosphere."

officer, the informality of President Roosevelt's conference seemed almost indecent.

But the general good humor was infectious. In a few moments I was laughing with the rest of them. In a few more moments I was as much under the Roosevelt spell as they.

In a woman you would call the quality that is Roosevelt's charm. But charm is a word not masculine enough to describe his particular brand of it. I suppose the best word is—if its exists—likeability, but that again does not describe that feeling that hundreds of invisible tentacles are reaching out and drawing your warming heart toward him. It is a quality equally effective in a tête à tête, a conference room, or a mass meeting. It is a fortunate fact that those who see fit to attack Roosevelt can hurl their thunderbolts from a safe distance, or, I am sure, those thunderbolts would melt into silken pompons, like those with which the women of France pelt their heroes, long before they reached their mark.

I did not get to ask my question. It was about war debts. That subject seemed to be paramount in my mind at that time. But I cannot be blamed. It was drummed into me before I left England that America could never be really friendly with England until that great mysterious area, the Middle West, had forgotten about the war debts. And since my arrival in New York I had found that whenever I had the courage to utter a criticism it was answered, usually good-humoredly, with "Why don't you pay your debts and keep quiet?" But that was not why I did not ask my question. I did not ask it because it seemed to strike too serious a note.

Washington was, I found, as full of gossip as a ladies' cloak-room. But the men were just as bad as the women. Tele-

phone a friend with a rumor, and you would hear that same rumor on a street corner ten minutes later. Scientists would be interested in Washington, because it confounds all their theories. It's the only place where sound travels faster than light.

In a few hours I heard the lowdown on everything. Scandals from the embassies. Libels about the New Dealers. Lies about the cocktail set. A famous Senator was really the father of a famous hostess's child. A certain ambassador had certainly poisoned his wife. And, of course, that story about a former president's marriage was gospel truth.

There was plenty of gossip about Mrs. Roosevelt. There was all kind of talk about the way she influenced her husband, about how she thrust so-and-so into such-and-such a job. And the women correspondents—the most unfeminine group of people I had ever met—resented what they suspected was her determined campaign to sell them the Roosevelts. They complained about not being able to keep the First Lady out of their kitchens. They said they'd answer the doorbell and find Mrs. Roosevelt standing there with a bunch of spinach under her arm or an offer to mind the baby for an hour or so. They swore they would never give in to it. But they did. Three months later one of the most ardent of these gossipers was sitting at Mrs. Roosevelt's feet during her press conferences and talking nothing but baby talk.

Washington is the seat of America's government. From its government offices, I was told, is doled out political patronage, by which the party in power pays off those who supported it during the elections. Well, all that patronage was nothing to the patronage doled out by Washington's

private citizens. I mean I never saw such snobs in my life.

There seemed to be just two classes—those who give parties and those who go to them. Each was as rigidly restricted as the other. The hostesses had a sort of unofficial catalogue of the people who could be admitted to their salons. It was rather like the Automobile Association's handbook to hotels at home in England. The British Ambassador, for instance, would get a four-star rating. But the minister of an insignificant Latin American republic would only rate one star unless perhaps he was a perfectly marvelous tango dancer or had a simply divine profile. About half a dozen Senators were worth three stars because they were hard to get, but the rest would be given at best two stars. Supreme Court Justices got three stars as there were only nine of them, but a plain ordinary Congressman would be lucky to receive an invitation at all.

One Washington hostess, noted for her all-four-star parties, was still blushing because of a dreadful mistake she had made. A friend of hers brought Winthrop Aldrich, who, as head of the Chase National Bank, was worth almost five stars, to one of her soirées. The hostess, a little overcome by an abnormally large collection of the bearers of good names, did not catch his name when she was introduced. She gave him a smile that might have come out of cold storage, turned her back, and began talking to a three-star ambassador from South America. Mr. Aldrich's friend telephoned the hostess later to explain her *faux pas*. "My dear, how perfectly terrible," exclaimed the hostess, "and I thought he was just a Congressman."

Even the newspaper men were studying to be snobs. The

first thing they said when I was introduced as an English newspaper man was: "Well, of course, you've met Bill Lewis. Sir Willmott Lewis, you know, of the *London Times*." And then I was told that I simply must present myself at the Embassy.

Well, I did present myself to the British Embassy. I was received by a good-looking fellow, whose accent was as well clipped as his blonde mustache. He was the air attaché. I don't think he could have been very attached to the air, because he gave me so much of it.

I have said that I met the President of the United States and my first gangster on the same day.

I am afraid he was not really a gangster, but just a bootlegger. But we English had a way at that time of classing anyone connected with the illicit liquor trade as a gangster; and, as I was extremely anxious to be able to say that I had met a real American gangster socially, I did not permit my increasing knowledge to make me admit that Jack Ahearn was not a genuine trigger man.

It was, perhaps, particularly apt that I entered the establishment of Mr. Ahearn within the same twenty-four hours that I visited Mr. Roosevelt's White House. For Mr. Ahearn was very closely associated with the White House. I don't mean, of course, that he was the President's bootlegger or anything like that, but in the old days, Ahearn, by a studied piece of effrontery, would often walk into the Presidential mansion with his pockets bulging with hooch ordered by a Senator or Congressman who was calling there.

Ahearn hated Prohibition, and that was why he became a

gangster, bootlegger, hoodlum, or whatever you will call him. He was never much of a drinker himself; but, when his nation's legislators solemnly decreed that his nation would stop drinking, he was inspired with a burning, crusading passion. People should be allowed to drink whatever they liked, he declared, and so he opened a speakeasy—almost opposite the White House. His principal customers immediately were the legislators who, as a body, had passed the Eighteenth Amendment.

Ahearn was not at all what I expected him to be. I had confidently anticipated meeting someone like Chicago's Spike O'Donnell. I expected him to be half-sprawled across a chair with his elbow resting on a table. I expected him to wear a bowler—excuse me, derby—at a rakish angle. I expected him to talk from the corner of a mouth that was fastened round a masticated cigar. But Jack Ahearn looked quite normal.

His speakeasy looked more like a mission hall just after a whist drive. It was a large barn of a place with whitewashed walls. There were scores of little round tables, and nothing to sit on but cheap, bentwood chairs. There was a stale air about the place as though some large function had just finished. But Washington's finest were there. Lawyers, diplomats, Senators, even judges.

Ahearn came over. He looked like one of his customers. Tallish, slender, handsome in an Irish sort of way, conservatively dressed in light gray. He talked well with a quiet wit and an obvious intelligence. I was not surprised to hear that he had a university education.

Jack Ahearn's life is a great paradox. During Prohibition he sold whisky in defiance of the law, because he hated

Prohibition. He was one of the most popular men in Washington. He kept out of jail and made thousands of dollars. Came Repeal, for which he, as much as anyone, fought, and Ahearn went to jail for selling liquor without a license. Shabby and broke, and denying his identity to those friends who recognized him, he has since worked as a bartender on a cruising liner, and was last seen in a small Southern town. There are hundreds in Washington today who have never even heard of Jack Ahearn.

I was glad to leave Washington. No wonder the Congressmen become restive when the session lasts until June. It is the hottest town I have ever known. I felt all the time as if I were covered with thick blankets such as the doctors order when they want to drive away a fever. In my innocence I had imagined that the nation's capital would be dignified, sedate, and impeccable. And the only suit I took with me was a heavy, dark blue serge. Among Washington's linen-suited thousands I was as conspicuous as a medical treatise in the *Christian Science Monitor*.

•

CHAPTER IV

HOTELS in New York are just about as annoying as hotels anywhere. The only difference is that they have fifteen or twenty more floors upon which to be annoying. For a month I survived tea bags, a persistent chambermaid, and the horrible morning cheeriness of the telephone operator, and then I decided I must take an apartment.

The advertisements lured me to London Terrace, which modestly proclaimed itself the largest apartment house in the world. It was. It seemed to me as big as the whole city of London. But I couldn't have lived there. The doormen were dressed in what the management believed was the uniform of a London bobby. Their helmets were more like the topee of the Orient instead of that drab, blue, monstrous-looking thing London policemen wear. But they looked enough like cops to make me fearful of what I might be thinking when I came home some of these early mornings.

In two days' househunting I ran into all kinds of strange-looking doormen—Russian Cossacks, Austrian cavalrymen, British Grenadiers, Italian Bersaglieri. Finally I took an apartment in a building guarded by a corps of French Foreign Legionnaires.

It appears that there is a mutual agreement in New York among apartment house owners, painters and decorators, tele-

phone-installation engineers, moving companies, and the devils, Chaos and Disorder, that leases shall all expire on September 30. That means that almost everyone in New York moves at the same time. That means extra profits for the painters and decorators, telephone-installation engineers, and moving companies, because they can charge more, and extreme gratification for the devils, Chaos and Disorder, because they can see the routine of the entire city disrupted.

But to someone in my position the system was advantageous. The renting season was over, and the management was glad to give me a bargain rate for the balance of the summer. So I obtained a nice little penthouse on the eighteenth floor for a little less than my monthly salary.

I could just get a deck chair on my terrace, and there was room for half a dozen flower pots. The flower pots were my first acquisition. It was the best I could do to maintain the tradition that where there is an Englishman there is also a garden.

The apartment was furnished, but I had to supply the refinements. I went to a department store. I almost cried out for Mother. It seemed that this particular store insisted upon its clerks having a college education. Anyway, the girl who was showing me a nice line in dish towels seemed able to sense that I had not been to Oxford or Cambridge. I was surprised when she did not make out the bill in ancient Greek.

By the time I had reached the fourth floor (household furnishings, draperies, and home decoration) I felt as cheap and inferior as the chintzes. My only purchases were three etchings (apparently a necessary furnishing for any bachelor's home in New York) and three dish towels. I couldn't stand

any more higher education. I did the rest of my shopping in the ten cent store. It was quite a relief to hear some atrocious grammar.

The next thing was a cocktail party. I just had to have a housewarming, Dixie Tighe told me. So I telephoned the neighborhood cordial shop, and along came a dozen bottles of "gin" in a violin case. My mentors told me that it was next necessary to buy something to kill the taste of the gin. Grapefruit juice, honey, and grenadine were suggested. It seemed a strange mixture, but I was in capable hands. I went to the grocery store.

Ever since I was thirteen, when my mother's illness at Christmas time left me to do the Christmas marketing, I have avoided grocery stores. I don't like them in England, and I certainly did not look forward to my first encounter with a New York grocer. My premonitions were justified. My first order was almost my last.

The grapefruit juice order was simple. I bought some tomato juice just in case anyone needed sobering up, and survived having my "tomarto" corrected to "tomayto." But then the trouble began. The grocer was—I hope—Italian. My accent was still so English that a couple of delivery boys giggled. The grocer couldn't understand me, and I certainly couldn't understand him. Blushing and stuttering, I plowed through my list until, at last, I could stand it no longer. "Half a pound of butter, and that's all," I said. I got, for some reason still unknown to me, a pound of nuts. I left the store in disorder.

At last my penthouse was ready. Each ash tray had its little book of matches, one advertising ear oil, another a particularly

potent disinfectant, another a cure for indigestion, and another something to do with feminine hygiene. The canapés were in the icebox. The liquor was all ready. The geraniums were neatly manicured.

The first of my ten guests arrived punctually but a little tight. He was a reporter from the *Daily Mirror*. The second guest arrived with two people I hadn't invited. By six o'clock I had twenty guests.

I was so busy trying to keep up with the demand for cocktails that I did not have a chance to talk to anyone. But they did not seem to mind. Apparently I was fulfilling admirably my social obligations as a host by keeping the glasses filled.

The pace slackened down toward eight, and I was able to move among the guests for a while. Someone told a funny story. I roared with laughter. It seemed to surprise all the people who had not met me before. An Englishman with a sense of humor! There seems to be an impression around that an Englishman hears a joke on Monday, sees it on Wednesday, and laughs on Saturday. I wonder why.

By ten o'clock I was the lifelong friend of everyone at the party. One of them said he would take me out in a seaplane to Rum Row. Incidentally, I have never heard any more about it. Another invited me to his house for the week end. And the girls told me I was the only nice Englishman they had ever met.

Confidence inspired by the incredible gin led me to make a criticism of New York. "Why don't you go back where you came from?" yelled one man. "Oh, pay your war debts, and keep quiet," said another. And it was all very gay and—very

funny. I have heard those two sentences now for nearly six years. I think they are very funny now.

Toward midnight we were having trouble with the reporter from the *Daily Mirror*. He seemed undecided whether he would throw himself or me over the railing of the terrace. Finally he compromised. He bowled my six prized geranium pots eighteen stories into the street.

People began going home after that. One of the girls kissed me good night, and in the middle of the caress became, through no fault of mine, extremely angry. She picked up every glass in the room, and pitched them with deadly aim into the sink. She did the same with the gin bottles—the twelve of them were empty—and, with that, a beatific smile, a smile more warming than May morning sunshine, spread across her face. Divinely happy, she left.

It was counted a very successful housewarming.

The first thing a New Yorker does when he finds a home is to look for a way of keeping out of it as much as possible.

Among the less wealthy, the most popular way is the movies. When I left England, a lot of people still looked upon the cinema as a nice, warm, comfortable place, conveniently dark, where a swain could hold his sweetheart's hands and possibly steal a kiss or two. In New York, I had imagined people went to the movies to see the movies, just as they went to a concert to hear music, or to a theater to watch acting. Because, I thought, the American is very serious about his entertainment.

That was why I didn't believe one story that Dixie Tighe told me. It was about Leopold Stokowski, who at that time

was famous as a conductor, and not as the man who may or may not have married Greta Garbo. Stokowski was, according to Miss Tighe, giving a concert with the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra. But the people had come to the concert not to hear the music but to be able to say that they had been to the concert. There was the usual hysterical applause, of course, when the maestro appeared, but, when that had quieted down, the audience kept on chattering. Stokowski waited for a long time. Then there was silence. He waved his baton. Instead of sweet music there came the most ungodly bedlam from the orchestra stage. Each member of the orchestra, instead of playing, was chattering to his neighbor.

But I believed the story after I had been to the movies in New York. They don't go to the movies to see the movies. In summer they go to keep cool. In winter they go to keep warm. All year round they go to talk.

If exhibitors played the same picture week after week I doubt if more than fifty per cent of the audience would notice it. They would be too engrossed talking about the girl who got fired last Friday and that simply wonderful new five-dollar girdle.

I was so angry that I wrote to Major Edward Bowes, the man who started amateur hours, about it. "I have been to cinemas in almost every civilized capital in Europe," I wrote, "but I have never tried to see a film under such appalling conditions, etc." I didn't get an answer. Perhaps Major Bowes recognized that I was a professional, instead of an amateur, writer.

Someone once called the movie cathedrals the House of Usher, because of the beautifully uniformed young men with beautiful manners—until you question the right of their mili-

taristic control over you—who usher you to your seats. The ushers are very impressive.

But what New York's picture theaters really need is a Husher.

A friend had a rather remarkable maid. She was colored. She did not smoke, and she did not drink. But the remarkable thing about her was that she would take nothing more than her normal wages, no matter how late she worked. That struck me as particularly abnormal, especially as I had to pay a maid three or four times more than I would have paid in London.

I asked my friend the explanation. "Father Divine," he said. I had to make more inquiries, of course, and I discovered that Father Divine was a round-headed, chunky little negro, who was, as far as I could determine, a cross between Al Jolson singing "Mammy," and Aimée Semple McPherson being Aimée Semple McPherson.

But Father Divine had gone one better than most of the hot-gospelers. They usually preached they were the directly appointed servants of God. He just said that he *was* God.

Father Divine started a little less ambitiously in a shack in Sayville, Long Island. To negroes and negresses, particularly negresses, who embraced his faith, he served nightly a fried chicken dinner or pork chops. There is nothing colored folks like better than fried chicken or pork chops. He had many converts. In no time at all, there was a Father Divine sect in New York's Harlem. He forbade them liquor, tobacco, or promiscuous adultery, three luxuries difficult for the colored race to eschew. Above all, he taught his followers to

work hard for the wages they earned, all for the greater glory of God, i.e. Father Divine.

At the time I met Father Divine, he had taken up flying so that he might take himself and his flock a little nearer to the Heaven which he claimed as his own. His pilot was Colonel Hubert Julian, a husky Jamaican, who later became the flying corps of the ex-Emperor of Ethiopia. Daily flips to "Heaven" were adding greatly to the Father's prestige.

The mystery of Father Divine was his "manna." In other words, no one could find out from where the money was coming to finance his earthly "heavens" and his daily dispensations of fried chicken and pork chops.

I was no more successful than anyone else. "Peace" he said to me, when I introduced myself. To my questions he gave answers in a string of long, flamboyant words which I—and probably he—could not understand. Then I asked him my key question. "Where do you get your money for all these good works?" I asked. I had expected the question to stump him, or at least to produce an outburst of temper. But, without a moment's thought and very solemnly, he said: "The manna comes direct from Heaven in fresh, clean dollar bills."

Such an astonishing little man naturally aroused my journalist's curiosity in his people. I went to Harlem.

It is rather surprising I had not been to Harlem before. Most English visitors want to go there on their first day in New York. There is something pleasantly dangerous and sinister about our picture of the place, and at the same time something exotic—big, fat mammies, negro spirituals, and all sorts of talk about cotton picking, and Swanee Ribbers, and de ole folks at home.

But the Harlem I saw had none of that.

I was taken to a number of so-called night clubs. They were dirty, smelly holes in the ground. But the atmosphere was not nearly as dirty and smelly as the entertainment.

The star of the cabaret at one of these places was a portly negress, who had only recently achieved notoriety by a mock marriage ceremony which would have startled even a peddler of French postcards. She came onto the floor dressed in man's evening clothes and sang the first verse of a popular song of the day. For the second verse she came over to my table, and in a whisper which sounded as if she had just gargled with gravel she sang her own version of the song. It was the dirtiest thing I had heard since I left boarding school. I am, by no means, a prude, but I felt so ill that I had to leave.

A few more places like that, and I asked my guide to release me from my promise to sample Harlem entertainment. "Well, how about a little religion?" he asked. I was dubious, but I followed him.

A taxicab took us along a number of dark, grimy streets to a wider avenue. It stopped outside the unlit show windows of a small dry-cleaning establishment. Above the shop was a series of large plate-glass windows. On each was daubed a crudely painted cross.

My friend led me up some narrow stairs into a kind of lobby draped with sackcloth. The smell of the place reminded me of a suburban undertaker's. From the lobby we walked into a large room. There was a pot-bellied stove in the middle of the room, and the heat from it was oppressive. The room was furnished only with cheap cane chairs, arranged around a circle of bare floor, small enough to be the dance floor of a

night club. The chairs faced a rudely constructed platform, in the middle of which had been erected a preacher's rostrum. The rostrum, painted ebony, was chipped and battered enough to have been a prop from the equipment of an impoverished touring theatrical company. Behind the rostrum was a bunch of chrysanthemums arranged carefully in a rusty, tin can.

There were a dozen or more colored girls, wearing large white overalls, sitting expectantly in the front row of chairs. There were some colored men, dressed in their Sunday best, standing around the hall. But presently the place began to fill. Most of them were elderly women, with their marketing in string bags under their arms. The men were obviously laborers, and many of them still had the mud from ditches and sewers on their faces and hands. There was a handful of white people, all past middle age.

When the hall was half full, a white woman, bleach-haired, pink-cheeked, but mean-faced, came in from a side door and walked to the platform. She wore a white surplice, slightly wrinkled and roughed, and some kind of cheap diadem in her hair. Her hard, steely eyes jabbed each of the pilgrims.

Then a fat, round, little colored man, with a face which looked as if it had been shined with shoe polish, joined her on the platform. He wore a frock coat, which belonged in a museum, and a reversed clerical collar, which belonged in a laundry.

The service began. It was the normal nonconformist service at first, but then the fat, little preacher began screaming some unintelligible biblical text over and over. The congregation chanted the words after him. This went on for about half an hour. The mean-faced, white woman then came to the front of

the platform, and started clapping her hands, and shrilling the word Hallelujah. The congregation clapped and shrilled too.

Suddenly there was a scream from one of the white-coated girls in the front chairs. She leaped up from her chair with an expression of blissful agony on her face. In a paroxysm she jumped up and down around the circular clearing between chairs and pulpit, shouting, crying, and hissing "Oh, Jesus. Oh, Jesus. Oh, Jesus." Finally she collapsed on the floor, almost foaming at the mouth, writhing from side to side in a fit of religious fervor.

The white woman led a small group of the congregation in exhorting the girl to further paroxysm, and then, one by one, the exhorters leaped and jumped, and fell to the floor. A man, calm and matter-of-fact during the early part of the ceremony, suddenly jumped, as if he had been given an electric shock, from the chair next to mine, and joined the rolling mass of girls and women. One of the older women dropped her shopping bag, ran to the white woman, and clutching her surplice, fell in a heap at her feet.

And all the time that monotonous clapping and that monotonous Hallelujah continued. I felt frightened and troubled, like the white man must feel when he hears the throb of the tom-tom in the African jungle. I was not sure what I was going to do.

At last the Holy Rollers, as they are called, recovered from their paroxysms. As unconcerned and yet as satisfied as if they had just risen from normal prayer, they straightened their clothes, collected their belongings, and left. The white woman was at the doorway before them. She was just as unemotional

as she had been in the first moments I had seen her. She was holding out a collection plate.

"Did you enjoy it?" she asked me, as I left. She might have been discussing a theatrical show or a hootchy-kootchy dance. "They were good tonight," she added. She held the collection plate under my nose. "We have to live, you know," she said. And this woman, who made her living by playing upon the latent barbarian emotions of these hardworking servants, delivery boys, and ditch-diggers, did her best to make those hard steely eyes smile.

I have never been back to Harlem.

CHAPTER V

GETTING USED to New York was rather like taking up pipe smoking.

It made me sick at first, so sick that I wanted to give it all up. But if you persevere with a pipe you will eventually get to feel entirely unhappy unless you can fix your teeth into their grooves in the stem of your favorite pipe. After three months, that was how I felt about New York.

I had discovered, of course, that New York was not paved with gold, but with rather bad asphalt which bulged and boiled in the summer heat. I had overcome my disappointment that a bullet-proof vest wasn't as important a part of my wardrobe as a raincoat had been in London. I had established to my complete satisfaction that the efficient bustle I had always heard of was just about as efficient as our muddling through, and that the only difference between New Yorkers and Londoners was that the New Yorker got nowhere more quickly. But when the place had got into my bloodstream—like the insidious drug that it is—I found that I had an empty gnawing inside of me when I was away from it. I missed New York far more than I had ever missed London.

But with all that, I quickly discovered that New York had worked a subtle change in my disposition. In England I had always been as placid as a lake of heavy cream. Nothing upset

me; I could never get mad. But now I developed a series of hates, the passion of which sometimes frightened me.

I was a violent cop-hater, for instance.

I had always wondered why Americans, arriving in London for the first time, insisted upon telling their interviewers: "I think your policemen are wonderful." It was as much of a journalistic cliché as the Englishman's perennial praise of New York's skyline. I found out why they said it after I had lived in New York a month or two. It was because New York's policemen are lousy.

In England a policeman never forgets that he is a servant of the people. If he cautions you for breaking the speed limit or for passing a traffic light, he is firm but always polite. "It will be well not to forget again, sir," he will say. The important word in that sentence is sir. But in New York a policeman can never forget that his job makes him the master of the people. That is why the English cop carries a lightweight truncheon which is really only part of his uniform. And that is why the New York cop must wear a portable arsenal which sometimes he has to use. It is natural for people to try to resist a despotic master. But if they are permitted to remember that a policeman is a servant they are paying to help them keep law and order they will assist him by obeying him willingly.

I became a cop-hater in New York, not because New York's Finest, as they are euphemistically called, were occasionally corrupt and dishonest, nor because they were mostly Irish and I was English, but because they were bullies.

The policeman on traffic duty, I noticed, bullied the motorist. He behaved like a Dickensian schoolmaster with a class

naturally rebellious against his severity. Whenever he reprimanded me—usually for a trifling mistake—I remembered a horrible master at my first boarding school who used to hit me across the tips of my fingers with a ruler. I could almost feel my fingertips smarting as I drove on.

I excused the police at first because I thought they had the rights of the unprotected pedestrian at heart. Until I myself had some experience as a pedestrian. Then I realized that no longer could I turn to a policeman for help. In England there is a famous old song, "If You Want to Know the Time, Ask a Policeman." Its chorus describes all the things a policeman has to do to help a stranger. When I was lost in New York, I therefore naturally turned to a policeman. He answered my questions, but in such a way that I felt like something he had found after turning over a large stone.

While there are still taxicabs on the streets of New York, the cops should be forced to pay entertainment tax. They must have some sort of game which provides a prize to the policeman who breaks the greatest number of taxi drivers' hearts during a day.

New York's taxi drivers are, I admit, a tough lot. They are usually trying to find a way of cheating on the rules of the highway. There is an easy remedy. A ticket or a summons. But that would spoil the policeman's fun. Instead he must walk slowly and swaggeringly toward the driver. He must put his foot on the running board, and lean nonchalantly against the window. Then he must say with studied sarcasm something like this: "Well, I guess you're pretty disappointed you haven't found some old women and children to run down. Looking for someone to kill, aren't you? Well, you

won't be killing any more people for quite some time. Because I'm going to give you a ticket, see?" And so it goes on for five minutes or more. You, the unfortunate fare, watch the clock advancing. Impatient that your train is about to pull out of the station, you protest, and ask the cop to give the man a ticket and be done with it. "Oh, so you don't like it," says the officer. "Well, one more word out of you, and I'll take you along to the station, too."

About the same time I developed a hate about the Irish in New York.

There seemed to be a feeling abroad that every Englishman had an innate loathing for an Irishman, and regretted, as he stuck his fork each breakfast time into a heaping plate of Irish bacon, that he was not actually spiking a slice of Irishman. Quite untrue, of course. The age-old quarrel between Irishman and Englishman was largely a quarrel between factions instead of individuals. Like most Englishmen I rather liked the Irish, even if they were traditionally pig-headed, and traditionally stupid, even if they were so restricted by their priesthood in the natural outlet for their energies that they always had to fight someone—even if only each other.

But the absurd sentiment about the Irish in New York made me dislike them for the first time. Any exhibition of bad manners, any flaunting of the conventions of established society, any flamboyant deed that would bring imprisonment, or certainly ostracism, for a man named Smith, was excusable by law and public opinion alike in New York if the man's name was Mulligan.

It all seemed part of a pretty fantasy which pictured every

Irishman as a sort of road show edition of George Bernard Shaw. To a New Yorker, viewing Shaw from a distance, that was a compliment, because it wasn't realized that he was sometimes a most tiresome old bore.

No, the Irishman was witty, charming, gloriously irresponsible. If he got into debt, well, he was Irish. If he got into jail, well, he was Irish, and something had to be done to get him out of it. If he was a swindling, crooked politician, well, he was Irish, and the Irishman's frank dishonesty was just part of his charm. And if he ignored every federal law and encouraged a lot of romantic youngsters to break their necks by flying the Atlantic in powered packing crates, well, his name was Corrigan, and so what the hell, and let's make a national hero out of him.

A large number of Irish-Americans *are* witty, charming, and gloriously irresponsible. But America doesn't seem to understand that America, and not Ireland, gave them those qualities. In Europe we think the Irishman is funny, not because of his wit, but because of his blundering stupidity. The Irishman becomes witty in New York, because he picks up the native wit and makes it doubly funny by his naturally funny way of saying things. The Irishman becomes charming in New York because everyone expects him to be charming, and he finds it less trouble to gain things that way than by his more natural way of fighting for them. The Irishman becomes gloriously irresponsible in New York because tradition has found a way for him to get away with almost anything.

Ireland's principal exports to England are bacon and ham. Ireland's principal export to the United States is baloney.

I was upset, too, by the public mollycoddling of the Catholics.

I was brought up a Protestant, but I was never bigot enough not to admire the Catholic Church. In fact, I admired it so much that at one time I was on the point of joining it. But the Catholic Church has reached its eminence by forceful advance under forceful leadership, and not by mollycoddling from a lot of insincere Protestants.

It was distressing to find that New York's newspapers, quick to feature a scandal concerning a Baptist minister and one of his Sunday school teachers, would censor a story telling of a priest's momentary lapse from grace. They would run columns about the Pope. But the Archbishop of Canterbury was never news—until the Wallis Simpson affair came along.

It was mollycoddling, too, that permitted the League of Decency to censor movies so that the world at large might not see Clark Gable kiss Greta Garbo on the neck. Perhaps that was no great loss to the world at large. But it was a loss when Hollywood had to begin distorting history to please the League. I remember complaining about that to Martin Quigley, one of the League's great scissor men. I pointed out that it was historically inaccurate for the heroine of an eighteenth century drama, popular at that time, to end her days in sordid tragedy to prove to moviegoers that she got her rights for having been something of a strumpet. Quigley snorted. "We can't help that," he said. "If women want to be immortalized in our films, they must live decent lives, that's all."

It was mollycoddling, too, that permitted Father Charles Coughlin to turn from a priest with a good speaking voice into a national menace. When thousands of people began

Irishman as a sort of road show edition of George Bernard Shaw. To a New Yorker, viewing Shaw from a distance, that was a compliment, because it wasn't realized that he was sometimes a most tiresome old bore.

No, the Irishman was witty, charming, gloriously irresponsible. If he got into debt, well, he was Irish. If he got into jail, well, he was Irish, and something had to be done to get him out of it. If he was a swindling, crooked politician, well, he was Irish, and the Irishman's frank dishonesty was just part of his charm. And if he ignored every federal law and encouraged a lot of romantic youngsters to break their necks by flying the Atlantic in powered packing crates, well, his name was Corrigan, and so what the hell, and let's make a national hero out of him.

A large number of Irish-Americans *are* witty, charming, and gloriously irresponsible. But America doesn't seem to understand that America, and not Ireland, gave them those qualities. In Europe we think the Irishman is funny, not because of his wit, but because of his blundering stupidity. The Irishman becomes witty in New York, because he picks up the native wit and makes it doubly funny by his naturally funny way of saying things. The Irishman becomes charming in New York because everyone expects him to be charming, and he finds it less trouble to gain things that way than by his more natural way of fighting for them. The Irishman becomes gloriously irresponsible in New York because tradition has found a way for him to get away with almost anything.

Ireland's principal exports to England are bacon and ham. Ireland's principal export to the United States is baloney.

I was upset, too, by the public mollycoddling of the Catholics.

I was brought up a Protestant, but I was never bigot enough not to admire the Catholic Church. In fact, I admired it so much that at one time I was on the point of joining it. But the Catholic Church has reached its eminence by forceful advance under forceful leadership, and not by mollycoddling from a lot of insincere Protestants.

It was distressing to find that New York's newspapers, quick to feature a scandal concerning a Baptist minister and one of his Sunday school teachers, would censor a story telling of a priest's momentary lapse from grace. They would run columns about the Pope. But the Archbishop of Canterbury was never news—until the Wallis Simpson affair came along.

It was mollycoddling, too, that permitted the League of Decency to censor movies so that the world at large might not see Clark Gable kiss Greta Garbo on the neck. Perhaps that was no great loss to the world at large. But it was a loss when Hollywood had to begin distorting history to please the League. I remember complaining about that to Martin Quigley, one of the League's great scissor men. I pointed out that it was historically inaccurate for the heroine of an eighteenth century drama, popular at that time, to end her days in sordid tragedy to prove to moviegoers that she got her rights for having been something of a strumpet. Quigley snorted. "We can't help that," he said. "If women want to be immortalized in our films, they must live decent lives, that's all."

It was mollycoddling, too, that permitted Father Charles Coughlin to turn from a priest with a good speaking voice into a national menace. When thousands of people began

listening to his weekly sermon, more temporal than spiritual, broadcast from the Shrine of the Little Flower, the radio companies could have eased him out slowly and effectively. But Coughlin was a good draw for the Catholics. So they built him up. Now even the Catholic Church dares not shut him up. He might become a national martyr, and the Catholic Church knows better than any how powerful a martyr may become. And so Father Coughlin can with impunity sway elections, dictate financial policies, curse Jews, praise dictators, damn Roosevelt, and boost Coughlin. If those are the duties of a parish priest, then I will turn Buddhist.

Sometimes I became passionately angry at bigoted ignorance. I wanted to commit murder, for instance, when a girl confided in me that a priest had told her on her wedding eve that she was really illegitimate and that she nearly killed herself until she discovered that the reason was that her father and mother had not been married in the Church. And my feelings were not entirely Christian when Dixie Tighe told me that the nuns in a convent school in Washington had made her take a bath in a nightgown, told her that it was a sin to sneeze, and explained that circumcision was a gash in the forehead. But I found New York's Catholics for the most part excellent people. Reasonable, broadminded, honest people who, unlike so many churchgoers in England, went to church to pray, and not to look at that awful thing that Mrs. Muggins called her best Sunday hat.

I was never very good with children. Before I came to America I was painfully shy. My shyness was at its worst with youngsters. If a child came into the room I always stood up with an erectness I usually denied its elders, shook hands

formally, and asked most solicitously after its health. When fond parents asked their little girl to give the big man a good-night kiss, I always prayed for universal birth control. American children didn't cure me of all that. In fact, I hated American children.

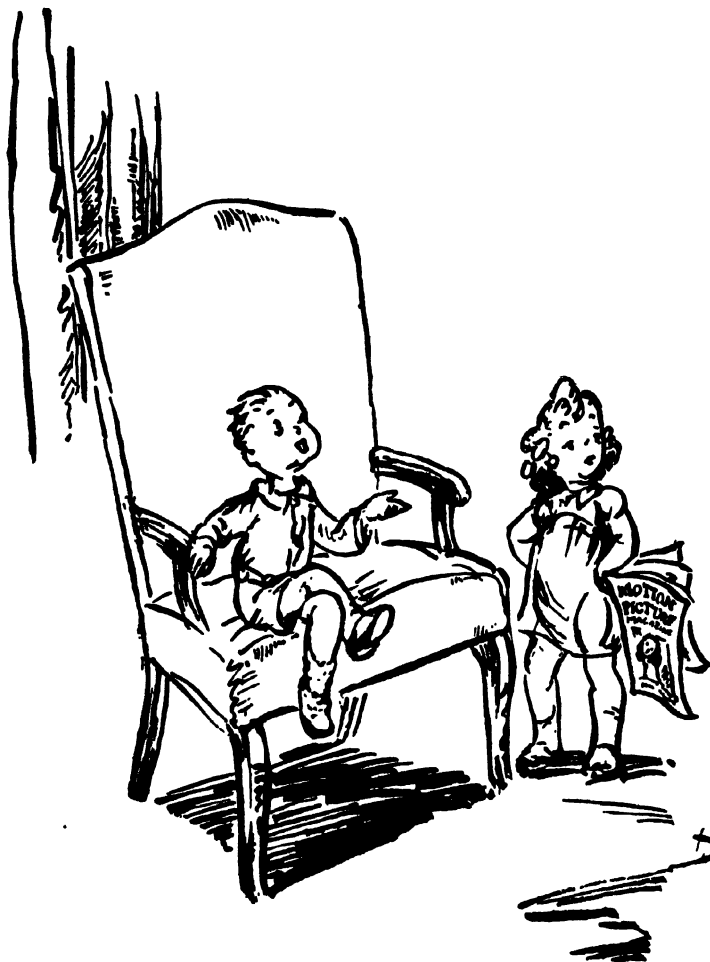
In England the children did at least think my behavior was strange, and, after looking at me for a few moments as if I were something in a zoo or a shop window, they let me alone. But in New York they seemed to take it all for granted, as if it were generally conceded that they should receive the same courtesies as their parents.

I blamed it on the steam heat, but it seemed to me that the children in New York had been grown in a hothouse, forced like Christmas roses and early daffodils to advance quickly beyond their years. By the time I had met several of them I almost expected to be told a smutty story or invited to join them in a cocktail. I should never have been able to tell them about the Stork. I should have been too afraid they would have said they preferred El Morocco.

In those early days I was often meeting Americans who had just returned from a trip to the Old Country. In my innocence I always asked them how they liked it. The answers were nearly always similar. Fog. Foul food. Plumbing that belonged in the Smithsonian Institute. Shivered from morning to night. Impossible to get a bath. Most adorable men. But, my dear, the women—!

After a month or so I thought that I had the right to retaliate. I adored the American women. But the men—!

I decided I had never met anyone quite so fascinating as the American woman. She was usually good-looking. If she wasn't,



"I almost expected to be told a smutty story or invited to join them in a cocktail."

she knew what to do about it. She dressed smartly, even when she had to dress cheaply. She talked as smartly as she dressed, and did not drop her eyes like the Englishwoman when someone mentioned lavatories or fornication at the dinner table. I had been haughtily amused, and at the same time a little shocked, by the frankness of advertisements about "calendar fear" and such things in American magazines I had read in London. But now I understood that frankness. It was possible because the American woman had no false modesty about her body and its natural functions. She even seemed proud enough of being pregnant that she actually showed herself big with child in public until the last possible moment.

It would be difficult indeed for a nation to produce a breed of men able to maintain the supposed superiority of his sex among such women, and so in my eyes American men suffered by contrast. Most of them bored me. They were bores because they were naturally bores, or because they worked so hard to prove they were not bores. They were such *nice* fellows that I wanted to contrive to have them found drunk in a brothel. Or such blades, always talking about how many women they had slept with and how drunk they were last night, that I wanted to take them to dinner at a Salvation Army hostel.

My favorite relaxation in London had always been a pub-crawl. Two or three harmonious fellows who could enjoy themselves going from bar to bar until closing time. I couldn't find anyone in New York to take on a pub-crawl. They all wanted to get drunk too quickly.

Above all, I found that American men talked too much. I was always a good listener. In fact, I preferred to listen than

to talk. But sometimes even I had something to say. The more I lived in New York the more articulate I became. But I could seldom get the floor, and when I had it I could never hold it.

In other words, American men are very much like the American parole boards—they simply will not let you finish your sentence.

CHAPTER VI

CUBA and Mexico, turbulent neighbors of the United States, had for a long time been competing with each other, like racing motorists, to see which could produce the most revolutions per minute.

In the early autumn of 1933, Cuba was ahead. I had heard desultory shots—or perhaps it was just static—when I spoke by long-distance telephone to a harassed secretariat at the presidential palace of Gerardo Machado, who, for some years, had been the Island republic's dictator. Then there was a revolution. Machado had to flee by air. His palace, his statues, his box at the opera house, his barber's home, his favorite restaurant, even the bar where he went for his aperitif, were sacked by revolutionaries. A new president was appointed.

But he wasn't able to satisfy Cuba. There were more new presidents. So many new presidents that Dixie Tighe aptly suggested they should make the presidential anthem "Just For Tonight."

With the soldiers revolting against their officers, and with open civil war a matter of moments, Washington sent a warship or two to Cuba ostensibly to watch out for American interests, but actually to put the fear of God's own country into the revolutionaries.

So one morning I received a cable from my farsighted for-

eign editor, Charles Sutton, saying: "BETTER QUICKEST CUBAWARD."

I have little or no physical courage, and I must admit I was apprehensive as the seaplane skimmed over the sapphire waters of Havana's harbor about twenty hours later. The situation had been termed so serious that the least I expected was the spatter of machine-gun bullets against the fuselage. But when we landed it all looked like the Hollywood version of a spot of bother in Latin America. The soldiers didn't seem to be used to carrying carbines, and I felt they would have been more at home in white flannels and straw hats behind a line of chorus girls. Now and then a van of handsome students dashed by. They were singing. The words probably meant something menacing, but it all sounded much more like a chorus Oscar Hammerstein III thought up. Then there was a carload of girls, all fairly pretty, throwing garlands of tropical flowers into the street and chanting "Viva Republica." I should not have been a bit surprised to see Jeanette MacDonald appear at a balcony singing "Under a Cuban Moon."

The man of the moment in Cuba was a former sergeant in the army, Fulgencio Batista. Handsome in a half-bred sort of way, Batista joined the army as a private. But he was always ambitious; as a private, he noticed the sergeants had to take a great deal of dictation from their superior officers, and so he learned shorthand. One day the officer was short of sergeants and dictated his orders to Batista. Batista took them down faster than any sergeant, and so the officer made him a sergeant. But Batista, filled with an ambition to be a sort of Emperor Jones of Cuba, grew tired of taking dictation, and

decided to do a little dictating for himself. So he became—and, what is more remarkable, still is—dictator of Cuba.

Batista had not been a colonel for more than twenty-four hours when he discovered it was not all fun being a dictator. There were a dozen strikes to be settled—icemen, butchers, domestic servants, bartenders, even Woolworth employees. He had to find a new president, and the job had lost a great deal of its appeal. Vicious bands of young students intoxicated with the success of their revolt against the Machado regime, were meeting in schoolrooms and mission halls plotting new demonstrations of their power. Most important of all, the army, freed of discipline, had to be taught to obey orders again.

General headquarters, in Havana's historic old Morro Castle, was more like the saloon bar of a tavern. When I inquired downstairs for the office of the commander in chief, soldiers jerked their thumbs informally over their shoulders to indicate I would probably find him upstairs. Upstairs I waited in a large anteroom for my audience. The room was full of soldiers. They were lolling about in armchairs, exchanging in loud voices smutty stories. Batista, still wearing the uniform of a sergeant, came out of an inner office. He handed an envelope to a private, who did not bother to shift from his reclining position. The commander in chief instructed him to take the message to a subordinate. His legs still stretched over the arms of his chair, the private opened the envelope, read the contents slowly and deliberately, and then, with the Spanish equivalent of O.K., he got up and slouched out of the room.

Presently I asked Colonel Batista what he planned to do about incidents like that. He smiled his attractive smile.

"They love me," he said. "They will obey me without question when it is necessary."

Love for Batista was about all the soldiers were working for at that time. Frowned upon by bankers and foreign governments, the regime was definitely short of cash. Even some of the higher officials were almost down to borrowing their lunch money from wealthy friends. With the banks refusing to advance funds it was out of the question to pay the soldiers. Batista kept his men loyal by commandeering supplies of beer, by distributing it to his men, by dropping into their camps occasionally to sit down for a glass of beer with his subordinates, and, above all, by promoting all those who had worked for him in the revolt, so that there was hardly a private left in the Cuban forces.

This last measure provided its embarrassing moments. At one of the telegraph offices, I saw the reply of a leader of the revolt in a provincial garrison to Batista's telegram thanking him for his assistance and appointing him to the rank of captain in reward for his efforts. "Local troops have already named me their colonel," said the provincial leader, "and so I very much regret I am unable to accept your offer of the rank of captain."

Meanwhile a president had to be found. Batista picked his man. Tall, lean Ramon Grau San Martin, one of the best obstetricians in Havana. The good doctor had to be persuaded to accept a job which usually ended in a one-way flight to exile in Miami, but, after he had accepted it, he did his best to bring the bedside manner into politics. But, good obstetrician though he was, he knew too little about such labor pains

as Cuba's working classes were suffering, and a few weeks later he was in a seaplane Miami-bound.

Grau San Martin was inaugurated on a Sunday. The ceremony was a flop. It was very hot, and there had been so many inaugurations of late that they were losing their novelty. There could not have been more than three thousand people gathered under the balcony of the presidential palace when the new president came out to introduce himself.

If Batista thought the inauguration of his puppet president would quiet the insurgent elements in Havana, he was bitterly disappointed. The ceremony hadn't been over an hour when there came to him reports of shootings and bombings all over town. The students had gone wild again.

The students, each of them looking like a boyhood snapshot from the album of Julius Caesar's Cassius, had formed themselves into a secret society which they called the A.B.C. They had furnished themselves with crude arms, and gathered in the early hours of the morning for drills and parades. Just in case there were some people more impressed with the spoken word than the sight of their guns, they had established a radio station on the top floor of a residential hotel. Night and day they broadcast one-sided arguments for their latest campaign, Stop Yankee Intervention. In other words, they wanted those American warships to stop adorning the skyline.

The Cuban woman of quality is, as a rule, a sheltered creature. She spends most of her time indoors. If she ventures out into the town unescorted, it is generally assumed by Cuban manhood that it is all right to hiss at her. That is the Cuban gentleman's method of making a pick-up.

But the extra-curricular activities of the student body had

changed that. The girls were as actively vicious as the boys. I soon discovered that my first sight of them—prettily throwing garlands of flowers from a speeding motorcar—was by no means typical. They were much more likely to be throwing bombs.

Determined to fight the United States marines if they landed, the girls had formed a brigade of Amazons. By a door-to-door canvass, they had enlisted housewives to join them. For weeks they had been drilling every morning at dawn in farmyards on the outskirts of the city. They were now expert in handling a rifle, according to report, and had made a blood pledge to kill every American marine they saw marching down the streets of Havana. They called themselves "The Battalion of Death."

The most dangerous of the Battalion was, apparently, Sylvia Shelton. She was twenty-five then, but she had been a revolutionary since she was nineteen. She had been in jail once or twice for shooting supporters of Machado's government long before the dictator-president had been forced to flee for his life. She was generally believed to have thrown a bomb which had killed half a dozen people during a parade. I felt that, whether I liked it or not, I should meet Miss Shelton.

Someone gave me her address, and I drove out to one of the nicer suburbs. I freely admit I was scared. As I have said somewhere before, I am never at my best meeting women for the first time; and I was more nervous than ever at the prospect of meeting this student who had won her diploma in the art of sudden death.

The taxicab stopped outside an elegant, Spanish-looking house. I thought there must have been some mistake, but a

trim, uniformed maid indicated that Miss Sylvia Shelton lived there. I was asked to wait. I sat in a cool living room, exquisitely furnished. The room was full of heavy antiques, with a strong Spanish accent, and there were—incongruously, I thought—at least six pictures of Madonnas on the walls. I looked everywhere for a gun or a rack of bombs, but all I could find was a sewing basket.

I am not sure what kind of a girl I expected to see. Perhaps a large-boned, wide-hipped Amazon, with the blazing eyes of a fanatic. Perhaps an untidy, slinking little creature, with the half-cracked voice of a tub-thumper. But whatever I expected, I certainly did not expect the girl Sylvia Shelton turned out to be.

She swished into the room in a long white gown of taffeta. When I turned round to meet her, it seemed as if some invisible hand had switched on a concealed, suffused light, which flecked the dark room with well-simulated sunshine. She was beautiful. One of the most beautiful girls I have ever seen.

Her hair was dark and exquisitely combed. Her face, sufficiently rouged and powdered to make her cheeks look like a sun-kissed peach, was perfect. Her eyes were as deeply and interestingly dark as the water at the bottom of a well. Her figure was such that she should have never worn anything but a bathing suit. And her hands, hands which had so often pulled a trigger and thrown a bomb with unerring aim, were as pale and shapely as any you could find beside the Shalimar.

She began talking. Her English was almost perfect, but there was just enough trace of an accent to make me want to listen to her for the best part of the day. It looked as if I would have my wish. As soon as I had indicated my interest

in her "work," she talked for half an hour without stopping. She spoke seriously but unhysterically. There seemed to be nothing of the fanatic about her. She explained that she and her associates were working for Cuba's hard-pressed laboring classes, because they thought that, in bettering their lot, they would turn Cuba into a real country, instead of a country that could be laughed at and scorned by its haughty neighbors. She had fought against Machado because he was a selfish despot. She would fight against Batista and Grau San Martin if they tried to better themselves instead of bettering Cuba. The only time I saw the reflection of fire in those two pools of deep well water was when I mentioned the possibility of American intervention in their disputes.

"We girls will bear arms for our country to prevent intervention," she said, hotly. "We will not tolerate interference from the United States. They will land over our dead bodies."

Her mention of bodies reminded me again of all the hair-raising stories I had heard of her. I asked rather timidly if these stories were true.

"Of course," she said, simply. "Of course."

And she told in a matter-of-fact voice that she was responsible for many more deaths. She spoke of killing and murdering with just as much feminine simplicity as if she were talking about knitting and sewing.

"It is sometimes necessary to kill in Cuba," she explained, and then she asked me to have a cup of tea.

With the manners of a wellbred hostess she saw me on my way. In spite of my horror at her record, I wanted very much to ask her to have dinner with me. But prudence prevented

my extending the invitation. She might lose her temper, I remembered.

Months later, I saw a dispatch from Cuba that Sylvia Shelton had been killed. She deserved, I am sure, to meet the end she so often engineered for her enemies, but I do hope that report was not true.

That evening I invited Dixie Tighe, who was covering the revolution for an American syndicate, to have dinner with me at the Nacional Hotel. It was quite possible she would lose her temper too, but I knew that she would not attempt to settle the argument quite so abruptly as Miss Shelton. We drove along the spectacular Malechon Drive to the hotel, a luxurious tourists' establishment overlooking the wide sweep of Havana's most beautiful bay.

The hotel was surrounded by troops. Opposite the driveway leading up the hill to the hotel's front entrance were three trucks manned by machine guns and a dozen or more soldiers with rifles and fixed bayonets. Our taxicab was permitted, however, to enter the hotel without question.

There was obviously something unusual happening in the hotel. There were no waiters or bellboys in the lobby. There were no lift operators. Even the girls from the hotel's telegraph offices had vanished. And there was a lot of shouting from the ballroom.

In the ballroom were gathered all the officers ousted from their commands by Sergeant Batista's revolt.

When Dixie Tighe and I entered the ballroom, there was an outburst of hissing. We were not hissed because we were unpopular. The officers, even desperate and harassed as they

were, were merely drawing attention to the presence of the comely Miss Tighe.

A more hysterical bunch of men I have never seen. There was more shrieking and quarreling than at the first rehearsal of an opera company. Every five minutes or so a scout would burst breathlessly into the room and report that another machine-gun unit had arrived at the gateway. Somehow the quarreling mob of officers came to a decision. The decision was that they would stay in the hotel, and, if necessary, withstand siege.

In a few moments it became obvious that it would be necessary for them to withstand siege. Those of the hotel staff who had remained on duty were withdrawn. Sandbag intrenchments were erected by the troops outside; bayoneted guards were posted; and no one was permitted to leave or enter the hotel.

Inside the hotel there was the greatest excitement. The bedrooms were torn apart. Pillows were placed like sandbags on the window ledges, and half a dozen machine guns were set up. They found a young lieutenant who could work a telephone, and he was placed in charge of the switchboard. Two more lieutenants worked the lifts. There was a call for volunteers for cooking duty. Within an hour of their decision to withstand siege a dozen or more young Cuban aristocrats, with aprons over their uniforms, were busy peeling potatoes.

By nightfall, the officers were jittery and apprehensive. They expected a surprise attack. Scouts were posted in the palms in the hotel's front garden. A company of officers, armed with rifles, formed up in the lobby, and awaited a call for action.

A rifle went off by accident. That report, echoing through the lofty marble lobby, nearly started general carnage.

There was an occasional crack from a rifle down in the street below. The shots, intended no doubt to intimidate the besieged officers, were fired into the air. But I had a feeling with these Cubans that they might shoot me right through the temple while aiming for the moon, and Miss Tighe and I felt none of the elation we should have felt at being the only newspaper people right in the middle of this ludicrous situation.

The only thing to do, as far as we could decide, was to await the end calmly. So we went down into the hotel's kitchen, and, while the potato-peeling officers were looking the other way, we stole two large cold lobsters out of the ice-box. We carried the lobsters upstairs, walked out the French windows to the Pompeian swimming pool at the back of the hotel. Sitting down on beach chairs we silently pulled our lobsters to pieces and wondered what would happen next.

Next morning the situation was unchanged, except that the besieging troops had relented sufficiently to allow the officers' wives to pay short visits to the hotel. The wives were searched before they were permitted to walk up the driveway, and all packages, even boxes of chocolate, were taken away from them.

We were pondering the reason for this lapse on the part of the angered sergeants. Presumably, we thought, the naturally romantic Cuban thought that even semiwarfare was not an excuse for a complete cessation of the national pastime of love-making. But presently we found it was no such touching quixotism that prompted their generosity.

A motorcar drove up under the portico of the hotel. In the

back seat sat two women, neatly dressed. Large picture hats concealed most of their faces. They left their car and walked up the steps toward the lobby. The guards challenged them, and almost before the visitors could reply they seized them. They tore off the large picture hats and ripped off the pretty summer dresses. The other officers and gentlemen of the Cuban army were about to come to the girls' assistance, when they saw that they were not girls at all, but two young students, who had hoped, by dressing up, to spy out the enemy's country for their friends, the common soldiers. They were thrown down the steps, and, when they could pick themselves up, they ran for their lives down the driveway.

Dixie Tighe and I decided that we must make a run for liberty. We had a nice little scoop, but there was no way of transmitting it from the hotel to our respective organizations. With an uncomfortable shiver traveling at high speed up and down our spines, we summoned a cab, and started down the hill.

A large negro soldier and a small, vicious-looking white soldier stopped our car with their bayonets. They both spoke at once in a Spanish dialect that was completely unintelligible to either of us. The negro made as if to search Miss Tighe, but Miss Tighe is a Southern girl, and her expression was so malign that I really think the poor fellow was frightened.

"*Americanos*," I said, allying myself with the country of my adoption, because I couldn't think of the Spanish for English. They let us by.

Next time I came to the hotel, I had a veteran war correspondent with me. When we were challenged by the large negro and the small white man, my colleague waved them

grandly to one side. "*La prensa*," he said, confidently believing that he was telling them we were members of the Press. He could not understand why the soldiers roared with laughter. Nor could I. Still laughing, the soldiers waved us by. Inside the hotel I found a Cuban who could speak English, and asked him if he could solve the problem of the soldiers' laughter. He laughed too. "Your friend told them," he said, "that he was a female prisoner." *La Prensa* is the Spanish for the Press.

I was always allowed to enter the Nacional without question after that. When I arrived, the negro soldier would cry "*La prensa*," roar with laughter, and wave us by.

After that it was mainly a question of waiting for the inevitable explosion at the Nacional Hotel. It would have been a tedious wait, for there was hardly any other news in Havana, had it not been for the companionship of two other correspondents, Tom Pettey, of the *New York Herald Tribune*, and Bob Casey, of the *Chicago Daily News*.

They had been in Havana for months. During that time it had seemed they had extracted as much fun as could be extracted from a situation, which, after a first glance, had a degree of seriousness. Casey's favorite method of passing a dull day was to stage a public meeting. This was easy in Havana. All you had to do was to take up your stand by a lamppost and start shouting. In five minutes you would have a crowd around you. It did not matter that the crowd could not understand what Casey was saying. They merely tried to shout him down. In half an hour partisanship would appear. The crowd would split automatically into two sections, and begin fighting. At this point Casey would desert his lamppost,

run back to his hotel, and from his window watch with a smile that seemed to spread over his whole pudgy body the results of his handiwork. The meetings usually ended with the arrival of an ambulance, and if one of the wounded had been asked on his way to the hospital what he had been fighting about he would not have been able to tell.

When we took up life with Casey and Pettey, they decided they must make more ingenious fun.

At every mealtime at the Plaza Hotel ragged little urchins would appear at the open windows of the restaurant swinging their *maracas*, those allegedly musical instruments which form the basis of a rhumba band. The noise got on one's nerves, so Casey and Pettey decided to do something about it. They went out to corner the *maracas* market. They bought every *maracas* they could find. For one day we had a peaceful meal, but next morning the urchins were back again. They had found a new supply of *maracas* for the best customers they had discovered all season.

Casey and Pettey were still irrepressible. One night they asked us to hold the stakes in a bet they were anxious to make. Among the correspondents was Karl Decker, a veteran correspondent of the Spanish-American War, and he had taken up the boys on their boast that they could drink him under the table. They decided that for the purposes of the wager they would each drink the same all evening. They chose the insidious *pousse-café*, a drink consisting of half a dozen differently colored liqueurs. Casey and Pettey returned to the hotel at one in the morning. They were half paralyzed. Decker undressed them and put them to bed. When Decker



"There was, indeed, a horse, a tired, large white horse."

was sure they were comfortable, he left the hotel again to settle down to some serious drinking.

But Casey and Pettey recovered quickly. An hour later they were abroad again. It must have been toward dawn that my bedside telephone rang, and I heard the plaintive voice of Dixie Tighe, asking me if I would scramble into some clothes and come to her assistance.

"What's the matter?" I asked, fearful that some calamity had happened.

"The night clerk just called me," she explained, "and said there was a horse for me in the lobby. I'm not quite sure what to do about it."

We walked downstairs. When we reached the lobby we found that there was, indeed, a horse, a tired, large white horse. Casey and Pettey were tugging at its bridle, trying to lead it into the lift. The hotel clerk was tugging at its tail, trying to drag it out of his hotel.

"Oh, hello, Dixie," said Casey and Pettey, simultaneously. "We thought you would like this horse. We won it from the cabby in a poker game. It was easy getting it through the revolving door, but we cannot get the darned thing into the elevator."

"What on earth d'you want to get it in the elevator for?" asked Dixie.

"To get it up to your room, of course," said Casey, with the innocence of a child.

After fifteen minutes, Casey and Pettey tired of their efforts.

"We may as well go and play some more poker," said Pettey.

Next morning we asked them what happened to the horse.

"Oh," said Casey, casually. "We lost it back to the cabby."

We spent most evenings in Sloppy Joe's, a bar, which, for some reason I could not discover, has an unrivaled reputation in the Caribbean.

The Cuban rum drinks were excellent, but any drink with gin in it tasted just as badly as an American cocktail. They were so bad that I complained.

"Oh, I am sorry," said the bartender. "I thought you were American."

The explanation did not seem to make sense, and so I asked for a fuller one.

"Well, you see, at one time we serve the good gin to Americans," said the bartender, with a disarming smile. "No good. No kick like the American bathtub gin. We have so many complaints we decide to use bathtub gin. Very good. No complaints."

But it was not all fun, not all drinking, in those days waiting for the fuse leading to the powder keg to be ignited.

Often I came home to the hotel retching and unable to sleep from the sights I had seen. A child, with his naked belly, ballooned by starvation, protruding through his ragged pants. Women, care-creased and life-weary, tramping barefoot all night into market to sell a pitiful little heap of tropical fruits, so they might buy a scrap or two of fresh meat, some pickled fish, and a handful of flour. More women, scratching each other like thwarted tigers, while they fought for the contents of a rich man's garbage can. Horrible want, sickening poverty, in a land so fertile that a twig would almost knock you over in its haste to become a tree.

I was glad when London tired of waiting for the explosion,

and ordered me back to New York. I said good-by to the beleaguered officers, now almost enjoying the camping-out atmosphere of their captivity. I said good-by to the negro and white sentries, still enjoying the female prisoner joke. I said good-by with regret to Casey and Pettey. I had a moment's tender thought for Sylvia Shelton. And then I rode once more through that comic opera atmosphere to the airport. Soon I was flying the course of many an exile from this land of human volcanoes.

A few weeks after, I read a brilliant story in the *New York Herald Tribune* by my friend, Tom Pettey, who later became one of the principal "no" men of Hollywood's censor, Will Hays. It was an account of the battle of the Nacional Hotel, the raising of the siege of those unfortunate ex-officers of the Cuban army.

The battle raged for several hours, but the officers were hopelessly outclassed. The soldiers closed in on the hotel. Numbers of the officers, half-starved when the hotel supplies ran out, were shot down in flight. Others were shot by order of court-martial. Others were flung into hot, damp dungeons.

The powder keg went off after all.

CHAPTER VII

AMERICA won its liberty at a tea party. Many years later America regained its liberty with something a little stronger. I mean Prohibition, that Noble Experiment that turned morons into millionaires and millionaires into morons, was repealed.

It happened at thirty-one minutes past five in the afternoon of December 5, 1933. An excited people heard the good news by a national hookup. An excited people celebrated the good news by a national hiccup.

I hate dates, but I shall always remember that one. To me it was much more important than the almost legendary 1066 which is supposed to be the beginning of all time for us Englishmen. I don't mean that drink was so important in my life. Only six months of liquor that seemed to have been distilled from a five-alarm fire had made an abstainer out of me, even if it had made a nation of drunkards out of America. Good manners couldn't make me drink any more of Dixie Tighe's *crème de menthe*. No, Repeal was important to me because New York's people emerged like cautious groundhogs from their drinking burrows and when they found the sunshine—instead of the moonshine to which they were accustomed—they stayed above ground to make the city the gayest in the world.

I didn't set too much store on that liberty business. None of us has complete liberty. In England we considered ourselves the freest of the free, and yet we couldn't buy a drink after midnight or a bunch of carrots after seven-thirty. It meant much more to me that Repeal brought back equality and fraternity. Equality because I could then buy a case of champagne without taking out a mortgage in the knowledge that I was doing just as well as the Astors or the Vanderbilts. Fraternity because I could see the people I wanted to see without having to go mining for them in some subterranean cellar.

So I stayed up all night to celebrate Repeal. I had dinner at the Plaza. There were only two drinks, champagne and dry martinis. That was all the staff knew how to serve. "A terrible night, sir," said the headwaiter.

"I ask you to believe, sir," he explained, with ponderous sincerity, "that I have not taken a single drink during Prohibition. This is a new world to me, sir. In the old days, I could, of course, mix a perfect champagne cocktail, or a Manhattan, or a dry martini. Any of those normal drinks. But these young people, sir. They have been asking me for T.N.T.'s and Maidens' Blushes, and Death in the Afternoons. How, sir, can I know what they are talking about?"

Then I went to Broadway. Broadway the street of women and song. I watched it become a street of *wine*, women, and song. Broadway made a show of it, of course. There were signs saying simply "LIQUOR." And others, a little more subtle, which announced, "IT'S HERE AGAIN." I wondered for a moment what the people of London would think, had they seen signs like that along Piccadilly. But I enjoyed them.

Until, that is, I saw something in a cheap little restaurant next door to one of those places with chickens revolving on spits. I had always been brought up to revere crêpes suzettes. A row of Chinese girls sitting in the window of this restaurant turned out the pancakes from a kind of assembly line. America, it appeared, had to go in for mass production even with crêpes suzettes. But there was worse to come. There was a sign advertising the superb little delicacies that the vote of forty-eight states had made legal. It said: "LIQUOR PANCAKES—25 cents." Poor Escoffier, he must have been turning in his grave as rapidly as the chickens in the window next door.

Most of the Broadway night clubs were able to serve nothing but gin, a bottle of pale red ink, which they said was Californian burgundy, and a bottle of champagne, which they said was champagne. One establishment, which had two slogans in juxtaposition outside—"Fifty Glorious Girls" and "Never a Cover Charge"—announced by means of a barker that there were a hundred brands of wine and whisky for sale. I asked for No. 43, which was a rather rare vintage of Bollinger. The waiter came back in a minute or two and said he was very sorry, but they were all out of No. 43. So I had to have a bottle of that pale red ink.

Toward dawn I got home. There was a packing case in the foyer. It was a case of Scotch whisky. It seemed strange that it wasn't in a violin case. There was a note from the delivery boy. "First case off the *Majestic*," it said. I poured a bottle of Dixie Tighe's crème de menthe down the sink.

A distinguished American once went to Paris. The master Escoffier was asked to honor him by creating a special dish

for him. Escoffier went into retreat. For two days he worked on a piece of steak. For another two days he worked on a sauce. At last the master was satisfied. His nose twitching from his creation's exquisiteness he brought the dish to the table. The American grunted his approval. With a knife he gouged the meat that would have given way to a spoon. He took a mouthful. "Hey!" he called to Escoffier, who had retired a discreet distance. Escoffier hurried forward to accept with becoming modesty the compliments he deserved. "*Oui, monsieur,*" he said, bowing. Said the American: "Bring me some ketchup, will you?"

Most Americans during the malted milk era would, I think, have asked for ketchup. It was strictly a meat and potatoes period in the history of American cooking. What else could you expect? Good food doesn't go with soda pop—nor with firewater either. But a change came over New York right after Repeal. They started cooking things under bells of glass. They prepared chicken in whisky. The caviare got better, so that it tasted like caviare instead of mashed blackberry seeds like the stuff ambitious hostesses served on canapés during their Prohibition cocktail parties. Wine was dumped into everything—sauces, soup, meat, and cheese.

They made mistakes, of course. I mean they iced red wine. And drank Scotch with oysters. And served burgundy with fish. In fact, some of the restaurants found it wiser to suggest on their menus what wine to take with each course. But they were mistakes I gladly overlooked when I found that I could live again like a human being.

It seemed that in no time at all New York—or that part of it which was above ground—changed from a dreary place that

reminded me of a Y.M.C.A. hall on a Sunday afternoon to a city as gay as boiling water. There was so much ermine that it looked as if a snowfall had got up and started walking. The girls became more glamorous, their clothes more elaborate. Hotels that had been as empty as a Scottish kirk when the plate goes round became small but thriving metropolises within one great thriving metropolis. Restaurants appeared as if by the wave of a magician's hand. Plush took the place of beaver-board, magnificent doormen the place of peering eyes through a chink in the door.

Most of the speakeasies vanished. I suppose the men who had served thousands of illegal drinks behind their bars were afraid now of serving something else behind a different kind of bar. But two of them remained, and in time they flourished sufficiently to bring about a minor revolution in the social life of their city. I refer, of course, to the Stork Club and Twenty One, which helped to father this strange breed they call Café Society.

The Stork had been one of the most efficient violators of the Prohibition Act. I had broken the law there many times. My friends from England liked it too. With their blissful belief in *civis britannicus sum* they never troubled to bring anything but five-pound notes with them. It never occurred to them that there was any country in the world that would not cash English money. The Stork Club, they found, was one of the few places in New York which would cash it. I didn't find out what a service that was until Sherman Billingsley, its baby-faced proprietor, told me that he once paid his bootlegger with some of those notes. The bootlegger gave them back. Said he: "I've been given counterfeit money, bad checks, lead

slugs, and I.O.U.'s, but this is the first time anyone's offered me fancy wallpaper, and Sherman, you can keep it."

Billingsley, born in Oklahoma's Enid (backwards it spells Dine), brought the Stork Club up to front place again with his knowledge of what makes Americans talk. It wasn't Billingsley's newspaper publicity build-up that made the Stork Club what it is today. It was Billingsley's appreciation of the value of the superlative in the American mind. I mean you are always hearing about this being the biggest building in the world, and that being the widest street, and so-and-so being the richest man. They even invented a new way of measuring boats so that the *Leviathan* could call itself the largest liner in the world. Well, Sherman Billingsley used superlatives in all directions.

His waiters served portions of butter that could have been used for baseballs. The celery, spring onions, and olives were arranged in such profusion that it all looked like a forest scene by Constable. Ice cream was served in a bowl of ice large enough to be explored by Lincoln Ellsworth. The brandy inhalers were as big as oxygen tents. Slightly vulgar, of course, but people talked about those things. And when they talked they used two words that were very important to Mr. Billingsley, the two words Stork Club.

Anyway, celebrities began coming to the Stork Club. Sometimes Ernest Hemingway, belying the title of his famous book, *Farewell to Arms*, by getting in a fight with someone. Often J. Edgar Hoover, Chief G-man, giving scoops to his favorite tittle-tattler, and smiling at me because someone told him that I had written a story about Red Indians hunting John Dillinger in their war paint, on the presumption that America's west was

still largely populated by ferocious redskins. Nearly always fiery Lupe Velez, giving a public demonstration of how to fight Johnny Weismuller. Dr. Allan Roy Dafoe was always there when he came to town, and was usually recognized only by a few because he didn't look enough like Jean Hersholt. Dashiell Hammett, as thin and mysterious as his mysterious Thin Man, was there. And Dorothy Parker, a great wit until she got to brooding about the Spanish civil war. And Tallulah Bankhead, who always made me wonder what the bewigged Speaker of the English House of Commons would do if he had a daughter who said the things she said. And Peter Arno drawing naughty cartoons on the tablecloth. And so *ad infinitum*.

But soon the Stork Club got another function. It had to act, it seemed, as a sort of kindergarten for the children of those people who, by sitting long enough at its tables, had come to be known as Café Society. Through its doors passed each night—and morning—the boys and girls of parents who were, if not the cream, at least the Grade A milk of New York's complicated social structure.

For these children—they seemed children to me—Sherman Billingsley, mellowing but still baby-faced, conducted a night school of the graces. Under his watchful eye they learned the niceties of the night life they must lead to become social butterflies—or perhaps moths would be a better phrase, for it is they who are attracted to the bright lights. They took a drink or two. If they took too many, Teacher Billingsley sent them home. They got to know each other. But if boy met girl too robustly, Teacher Billingsley expelled them for a while. They learned the value of money. The fees in Teacher Billingsley's

school were by no means slight, and if they ran up too large a bill they got a lecture.

In all schools pupils get crushes on their teachers, and Teacher Billingsley's school was no exception. The boys and girls would compete to get a smile from the principal, and, failing that, they would concentrate on the assistants—head-waiters and captains and press agents. The holidays came, and the student body would go off to Palm Beach or the Bahamas, but they never forgot school. Postcards would arrive every week for Teacher Billingsley and his faculty.

Good times come to an end, and eventually the pupils of the Stork Club receive their diplomas. They throw aside their books—menus and wine lists—and prepare for college, where they must receive their final training for a career of snobbery. College is *Twenty One*.

The snobs saved *Twenty One* in the dark days right after Repeal. It was rather like the vogue for traveling on German ships after the Jews boycotted them. Stories went around town that *Twenty One* was half empty most of the time. Some of the smart set went there so they wouldn't have to look at anyone save themselves. Then more stories went around town. Ordinary people, that is, people without a reputation, were being turned away. There were reports that the Kriendlers, owners of the place, had two menus, one doubly as expensive as the other, and that people who were to be discouraged were given a table away from everything—and the expensive menu. Even Jack Kriendler himself contributed something to this build-up by letting it be known that he had thirty suits, one for each day of the month.

There were soon no more empty tables at *Twenty One*. It

was like getting into Eton to have a dish of ham and eggs there. Nowadays it is no good thinking you have any social standing if you are one of the Four Hundred. You have to be one of the Twenty One.

My host was very excited. "There he is," he said at last, pointing to a waiter with a bald head and a peculiarly stupid face. The waiter came across the floor of the restaurant. He knocked someone on the head with a tray. My host roared with laughter. The waiter removed everything from a table round which four people were sitting, and then took away the table. My host nearly fell to the floor. The waiter ran half-way across the restaurant, knocking over about half-a-dozen people, and directed a woman who wanted the Little Girls' Room to the men's room. Tears fell from my host's eyes. "Isn't he a scream?" he said weakly.

It turned out that I was witnessing one of America's great jokes—the ribbing waiter. I suppose I started that night another report that the Englishman has no sense of humor. My host was very disappointed that I wasn't as amused as he was. Well, I wasn't amused because the ribbing waiter was too much like the real thing.

America is too democratic a country to have good service. I went to a very expensive apartment house one evening to call on my friend, Quentin Reynolds, the magazine writer. "Oh, Quent's not in," said the doorman. A remark like that would have started a new industrial revolution in England, but in New York it was all rather amusing. So I would never be surprised if a waiter serving me in a restaurant suddenly sat down and joined me.



"America is too democratic a country to have good service."

After a week of going to a restaurant where I am known, my back is usually sore from being slapped by the waiter who wants to let me know that I am one of the fellows. And after a week of going to restaurants where I am not known I usually manage to get one complete meal.

So it is not the waiter in New York who waits at table. It is the customer.

CHAPTER VIII

YOU KNOW those intelligence tests? They fire words at you, and you, in turn, have to demonstrate your brightness by giving your inquisitor the word you immediately associate with his word. Like when he says "dog" and you—if you are a bright little thing—say "cat." Well, if a psychiatrist had ever flung the word "Miami" at me I know I would immediately have answered "millionaire."

I imagined that tired business men lay on Miami's beaches, just unattired business men now, seeking bronze, instead of the inevitable gold, to prettify their lily-white, if thick, skins. And while they lay there in the scorching sun, there cavorted, like slaves attendant upon sleepy sultans, a chorus of the loveliest girls in America. And then a millionaire would rouse himself from his innocent slumber, and blot the sun-tan oil from his sizzling body with a handful of thousand-dollar bills, and point, like an unversed gambler stabbing his list of runners, at half a dozen of the bathing beauties. "I will have you," he would say, with the same confident voice he used when ordering a hundred American Can, and he would take them to his palatial hotel, dunk them in a gilded bath filled with champagne (non-vintage), rape them half-heartedly, and send them on their way again, each with a necklace (a nice simple

jade cross) to compensate them for the problematical loss of their virginity.

Not a pretty picture to have of sun-kissed Miami, but an intriguing one.

When I received orders to proceed to Miami to cover the championship fight between Tommy Loughran and Primo Carnera, I cabled the office for a hundred pounds on account of expenses, and withdrew almost every cent I had from the bank.

I had heard vaguely that the trains to Miami were steam-driven palaces, that they had swimming pool cars, and night-club cars, and movie cars, and dance bands. But the train I took was just like one of those American trains I had seen in the movies. The same rows of curtained bunks, the same smiling negro porter, the same ordinary-looking diner with the same ordinary-looking food.

There had been a lot of snow and ice in New York, and so the train was fairly crowded, and I had been forced to take a drawing room, which had a lovely millionaireish sort of sound about it. To my disappointment, I found no Louis Quinze apartment waiting for me, but an ordinary room, about as big as the "full kitchen" they advertise with New York apartments.

I went all along the train trying to spot millionaires. The expedition was a failure. I thought once that I had found one, but he turned out to be Bill Corum, a sports columnist.

Well, we headed South. To the exciting, glamorous, colorful South. To the South, where men are not men, but gentlemen, and where girls have voices like honey oozing from its comb.

I waited for the train, my first real American train, to live up to the movies. Soon, I told myself, the bells would start clanging, the smoke would belch from its sides, the cinders would cascade from its funnels, and we would fairly eat up the miles. I waited thirty hours for that train to gather speed, but it never went more than forty and made more stops than the milk train from London to Dorking. And in the middle of the night they put on an extra engine at the back, and the two engineers played ball with all the cars in between them, and it was such fun. But I didn't care. I soon discarded my books and magazines, and, like a schoolboy on his first long journey, flattened my nose against the window.

Virginia, where tobacco and Lady Astor came from. How soon we came to Virginia! I always thought it as deep in the South as it could be, and hundreds and hundreds of miles from New York. Richmond, Virginia. There was a porter just like Stepin Fetchit. I found myself wondering if he knew he looked like Stepin Fetchit, and if he wanted to be an actor, too, and if he had a child, and if he, like Stepin Fetchit, christened it Jemajo, after Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. I got down onto the station platform, so that I could say I had set foot in Virginia.

And the Carolinas. Carolinas, North and South. What was that great vaudeville joke? Oh yes, "—As the Governor of North Carolina said to the Governor of South Carolina." Rather like that old English joke "—As Gladstone said in 1884." No point to it. South Carolina. There are clay-eaters still in South Carolina. The most illiterate state in the Union. Charleston, South Carolina. The most beautiful city in the Union. Azalea gardens, Spanish moss hanging, like gnomes'

beards, from the trees. An older civilization than most of America. A city where folks with money don't count, if they earn that money from trade. And business is still trade, to Charleston's way of thinking. I got down onto the station platform, so that I could say I had set foot on one part of America where money doesn't count.

Georgia. Lush, fertile Georgia. Lush. A lovely word. And I remembered how once I had cabled a story to London about something happening in the blue-grass fields of lush Kentucky, and how they had thought I was referring to a Kentucky town, and had printed it "blue-grass fields of Lush, Kentucky." Lush. So descriptive of these fertile acres. And of the two fresh, pink-faced girls I saw at Savannah station. Georgia Peaches, they called them. I got down onto the station platform, so that I could say I had seen a Georgia Peach.

And then Florida. A disappointment. Miles of flat, sun-baked wilderness. A slowly but surely rising temperature so that the windows had to be opened. More miles of wilderness. Then a weakling palm tree or two. More palm trees. A glimpse or two of a sea as blue as the eyes of a Swedish baby. And then Miami. Miami, playground of millionaires.

From the station I drove for miles through a town, which, I soon saw, was synthetically tropical. The palm trees, heeled over by a series of hurricanes, were too neatly planted to be natural to the terrain. Later, I discovered that every one of them was imported. The gardens, exotically beautiful with their vivid reds and yellows, were too carefully manicured to have sprung from the normal fecundity of the near-tropics. The occasional banana trees, with their leaves ragged like a knife used for opening beer bottles, their indecent purple

bloom, and their long bunches of fruit, looked like stage props. There was just one feature of the scenery which looked untheatrical—the acres of orange trees.

From the rates they quoted I decided that most of the hotels had mistaken me for a purchaser. But at last I found one hotel which would rent me a bedroom without expecting most of the interest on England's war debt. As soon as I had settled down, I baited my hook—with sucker fish, of course—and went off to land some nice fat millionaires.

Well, I was wrong again. There was plenty of money in Miami. There must have been; because I reckoned that to live properly I should spend about a shilling a minute. But it wasn't the right kind of money. There was none of my kind of millionaires. In fact, I found only one millionaire of any kind, Bernard Gimbel, the department store magnate. For the rest of them, Miami—even at forty dollars a day without meals—was too cheap. They were a hundred miles up the line at swank, snooty Palm Beach. I suppose it was called Palm Beach because of its trees. It might have been, though, because it was the easiest place for people to tell your fortune.

It was with some misgivings, then, that I set out on my second expedition. Until I had found out my mistake about the millionaires I had felt supremely confident about Miami's glamour girls. Anyone who reads the Northern papers would expect them. I looked for a sort of super-colossal Radio City Music Hall presentation with all the toothpaste advertisement girls from the *Saturday Evening Post* coming to life, before my very eyes. I still had some hope. So I went out and bought some brand new white flannels and walked to the beach. So much had my confidence risen that I was not

deterred by having to pass along an inspection line of flamingoes that reminded me a little too vividly of something I had seen on the end of my bed during a bad hangover.

The beach looked as if someone had started it, and then got tired. There was hardly enough sand to get in your watch. But I walked on undismayed through alleyways of large stomachs. I had never seen so many fat women outside of Germany, and these were, I judged, as far outside of Germany as they could get. They lay, apparently proud of their ampleness, blotting up the sun with as much exposed skin as the all too liberal law permitted. Instead of toothpaste advertisements, I was seeing reducing advertisements coming to life—and all of them “before” instead of “after.” I searched for half an hour. I saw a few pretty girls. But not nearly as many as I could see any day in New York. Where were my bathing belles? And why all these bathing bellies?

Well, I should have known better. I would retain that ridiculous English habit of believing what I was told. It wasn't as if I had only just landed in the United States. I knew all about ballyhoo. I didn't really believe that every girl who used so-and-so's toothpaste got a smile like that girl in the *Saturday Evening Post*. I didn't really believe that every Hollywood film was a masterpiece just because Hollywood said it was colossal. I should have known that those bathing belles were imported into Florida as were its palm trees. Just “cheese cake,” as some legendary photographer christened leg pictures because he loved cheese cake, cooked up by press agents for other gullible people like myself.

Disillusioned, I did not enjoy my stay in Miami. It was a pity, because I hadn't been to a resort like that before. In

England we call such places watering places. That is just about what they are, for there are so many restrictions that you can only get a drink by practicing sleight of hand. The only vice which is condoned is adultery, and that only because it would be impossible to check up on all the Mr. and Mrs. John Smiths. There was much more variety in Miami.

It appeared that a visitor could be held responsible only if he committed murder—and then only if he murdered another visitor. I drove a car for the first time in America while I was in Miami. I had no difficulty driving on the right-hand side of the road—England thinks the rest of the world is rather peculiar not to change over to her way of driving—except in an emergency. That meant that I was always in difficulty, because in Miami a state of emergency exists whenever more than one motorist is on the road. So it was always rather like a Harold Lloyd film when I went out driving. But no one in authority said an unkind word to me.

One day, when a heavy mist had covered the ground with three or four inches of water, Eddie Neal—he was later killed in Spain—asked if he could borrow the dream car, an ancient Packard that had everything except a Little Boys' Room built in. Three hours later he telephoned to tell me that the car had disappeared. He had parked outside fight headquarters. There was double-line parking when he arrived, but he had been detained longer than he had anticipated. All the other cars moved away, and the dream car was left standing in the middle of the road. A policeman took the car to the pound, which was well named because he wanted a pound, or five dollars, before he would let it out again. I had called a taxi

to take me to the pound when Frank Malone, a local newspaperman, restrained me. "They can't do this," he said.

He picked up the telephone, and asked for the chief of police. "Look here, chief," he began, "it's a fine thing one of your stupid lugs has done." He explained the circumstances. "Why, these people are visitors," continued Malone. "A fine name you'll get for Miami. Now see that car's back here at the hotel in half an hour." It was. A policeman brought it. "Please accept our apologies," he said.

There was every kind of entertainment in Miami. You could hear a Metropolitan baritone or a torch singer, watch a ballet dancer or a nasty little female impersonator. You could gamble at cards, dice, or horses. You could swim or fish. You could go on a pirate's ship that was fitted up like an amusement park. In fact, the whole of Miami was a sort of amusement park.

It was no Arcadian playground for millionaires. It was no trysting place for the nymphs. It was just Coney Island in a tuxedo.

I felt lonely sitting in the press seats on the night of the fight. There were so few people around. No heavyweight championship fight could ever have attracted so little interest.

But I was interested in the fight because of the fighters. I had known Carnera a long time, before he became known as the Ambling Alp. He came to the *Daily Express* office in London almost straight from the continental circus booths where Leon See found him. He was soon a sensation, because

he was so big, and because the only answers he could give to any question were "yes" and "no."

I felt sorry for him then. It was pathetic to watch him flash with such pride a gold-washed cigarette case from the ten-cent store that his manager had bought for him to make him forget his request for a little more than fifty cents a week pocket money.

I had seen him again in Paris, just before he fought Young Stribling. They brought him up to my hotel room, and the manager, angry as only French hotel managers can be, followed him complaining that his great feet were damaging the carpets. I asked Carnera if he really had a punch. He said "no," and grinned like a lion being asked if he hadn't better see the dentist. He came over and playfully patted me on the shoulder. They picked me up from the other side of the room.

But now I didn't feel sorry for Carnera. He was still as dumb as ever, except that by going to the talking pictures he had learned to say "me got no dough" instead of "yes" and "no." But he seemed so monstrous next to dapper, sprightly little Tommy Loughran that I felt for him almost the child's fear of an ogre.

Loughran was beaten thoroughly, of course, but he was philosophical about his defeat and sat up half the night afterward telling me the story of his life.

Part of it interested me greatly, because it concerned an Englishman to whom we English looked up as a hero.

It happened during the Naval Conference in Washington. Boxing was forbidden in the nation's capital. Congressmen were afraid they would lose the monopoly on fighting. But

some of the American delegation, hospitable as all Americans, decided that the naval men from London needed some entertainment more robust than garden parties and state banquets. So they put on an impromptu boxing show. Loughran, who happened to be in town, was invited to take part.

An Englishman refereed his fight. "He looked like a big shot," said Tommy. He and his opponent had been fighting only a few seconds, when the referee parted them.

"You're fighting a dirty fight," he warned Loughran.

"That made me sore," said Tommy, "I told him I'd been fighting since I was a kid, and had never been accused of fighting dirty yet." The Englishman scowled.

He cautioned Loughran during every round, and his language became worse at every warning. At last Tommy lost his temper and knocked his opponent out. The referee recovered himself, and went over to shake hands with the winner. "Perhaps I don't understand American rules very well," he said. When Tommy took off his gloves in the dressing room he found that the referee had slipped a five-pound note into one of them.

"I wonder why he did that?" Tommy asked me. "It seemed a funny thing for Earl Beatty to do."

All good things come to an end. And that is what happened to my bankroll. With a pair of white flannels and a carboy of bootleg rum (don't they pack acid in carboys?) to the good, I bought my ticket back to New York. On the train I looked over my finances.

I had eight dollars and seventy-five cents left.

CHAPTER IX

MARRIAGE is such a transitory state in America that I suppose the people who perform the ceremony have just lost heart. At least I got the impression that they were sorry they hadn't taken up a life's work that was more lasting—like undertaking.

It was in the capacity of best man that I attended my first American wedding. It was in the winter, and the reverend gentleman didn't apparently think that a marriage ceremony warranted turning on the heat. It was so cold that we all wanted to finish it as quickly as possible. But the clergyman had invented a little extra something that relieved the monotony of performing a marriage which, he was sure, wouldn't last out the year. He took bride and groom on one side and gave them a long and earnest talk about the significance of the wedding ring. His eyes sparkled as he traced the custom back to the days of savagery, and it wasn't until he began reading the service that his voice dropped to a listless monotone.

I attended my second American wedding in the capacity of bridegroom.

Like a true Englishman I had refused to betray the slightest emotional concern about the function. In fact, I made a feeble

joke about wanting to be married in Greenwich, because marriage was the beginning of a mean time.

So Dixie Tighe and I went to Greenwich. Quentin Reynolds, who had appointed himself manager of the function, drove us there. After an hour's drive Quentin said: "This is it." All my shyness returned to me as I walked into the town clerk's office to get a license. I had always been scared of town clerks in England. They were such splendid, lofty officials. Short black coats and tramline trousers. Heavy gold watch chains. Deep, pompous voices. I looked for such a man, but the only fellow I could see was a cadaverous-looking man in a gray flannel suit. He looked as if he were the town clerk's gardener. "May I see the town clerk?" I asked. The man looked up from his desk after a few moments. "Who do you think I am?" he asked. I was so surprised that I could hardly stammer my request for a marriage license. "Got to give notice," said the town clerk.

"But I thought you could get a license in Greenwich without giving notice," I said. The man started tidying up his desk. "If you want a license in Greenwich, why don't you go to Greenwich?" he snapped. "This is Port Chester, New York." I supposed you had to expect a town clerk who called himself a town clurk to talk like that.

We went on to Greenwich. Quentin Reynolds came with me this time, and he did most of the spadework. It was fine until the time came for the clerk to get down to vital statistics. He obviously decided that Quentin was the better man, instead of the best man, and asked him his name, birthplace, age, and so on. The clerk was quite surprised when Quentin pointed to me and said: "This is the groom."

The clerk took down the details mechanically. I felt as if I were being registered for showing at the Westminster Dog Show. Then he handed me a Bible. While I put my hand on it with the reverence the occasion demanded, the clerk spoke the longest word in the English language. It was: "You-swear-b'Almighty-God-you've-told-the-truth-the-whole-truth-and-nothing-but-the-truth-the-fee's-a-buck."

Three days later we were married. A justice of the peace performed the ceremony in a building so forbidding that it looked more suitable for divorce than for marriage. Five minutes later we came out again, carrying our certificate in a little white envelope, with a motto printed in silver on the back. The motto said: "Two hearts that beat as one."

In the corridor Dixie Tighe met an old friend. "We've just gotten married," she said. The friend looked at me searchingly. "May I present my husband," said Dixie Tighe, "Mr. Mr. Mr. Er—er—er." In the tension of the moment she couldn't think of my name.

Dixie Tighe, Quentin Reynolds, and I drove to a drugstore, and at the curb we drank double doses of indigestion medicine from paper cups.

With the arrival of spring, my English yearning for horticulture was not satisfied by the six geraniums on my apartment window sill.

When Quentin Reynolds announced he was going to take a house in the country for the summer, and suggested we share it with him, we jumped at the idea. So the three of us went along the Boston Post Road again, househunting this time.

We found a little white frame house on a back road near Stamford, Connecticut.

There was immediately an argument over servants. Dixie Tighe wanted a colored cook. She had had colored servants all her life, she said. She had been brought up by a colored mammy. I reminded her that "mammy" nearly went to jail once, because she was discovered selling her mistress's cold cream in small jars to her colored friends, telling them it was a special preparation which would take the kink out of their hair. That was just cute, said Dixie Tighe, and colored servants were good enough for her.

Quentin wanted a couple. He didn't seem to care whether they were white or colored. All he wanted was a butler to bring him drinks on a tray, and a uniformed chauffeur to sit in the back seat while he drove the car to the station.

I liked the idea too. I was still a little self-conscious with colored servants. I was always using that good old English expression, "working like a nigger" in front of them, and my friends from England seemed to think they couldn't understand English, and asked the most embarrassing questions about them while they were serving salad. A Jeeves was what I had longed for all my life. All the good English butlers come to America, and so you don't get a gentleman's gentleman in England until the government takes away more than you earn in income tax. So Dixie Tighe hired us a Jeeves.

James was Irish. When I asked him to get the car he said "shure." I didn't think Jeeves would have said that. But I decided that he would emerge in all his finery to serve dinner. Dinner time arrived. And so did James. But he wore no immaculate black morning coat, no winged collar, no neatly

creased trousers. Instead he was dressed in a used white coat which nearly reached his elbows, a pair of pants that had become too well acquainted with some lubricating oil, and a shirt that had been ironed with a porcupine. We helped ourselves at dinner. James just took the things away when we had finished with them. Sometimes before we had finished with them. In the middle of one of my best stories he decided it was time to speak. He did not bow, and say "If you will pardon me, sir, I will remove the salad." He grabbed the bowl in front of me and said, in a voice that must have won prizes for hog-calling, "Will yoose be troo with this salad now?"

Next evening I was looking everywhere for a bottle of Napoleon brandy (I know it wasn't really Napoleon brandy). I asked James if he had seen it. Yes, it was in the icebox, of course.

James and his redheaded, hot-tempered wife stayed six weeks. We were looking for an excuse to fire them when one night James put his head through the car window and bawled: "Bridie and me's leaving on account of the grub." In a rage Dixie Tighe made them empty everything from the icebox. Ham, salmon, canned chicken, and so on. "That ain't grub," said James. Then I solved the problem. We had been dieting for a month. There were no potatoes in the house.

Quentin and I capitulated. Our next was a colored woman, a real, robust, cheerful, Southern colored woman, rather like the maid Mae West always has in the movies.

One of our problems about servants was the servants' "room." It was little more than an old hen house, with some windows built in it. Anxiously we took Bertha to see her

quarters. She beamed as if she were back on the banks of the Swanee Ribber. "It's jes puffick," she said.

Bertha was wonderful. She cooked like someone bewitched.

Mr. Roosevelt took Bertha away from us. I mean she found that one of the New Deal spending agencies paid her more for doing nothing than we paid her for a week's hard work. Bertha left.

Bertha's sister came to us next. She was more the aesthetic type. She painted. The first time I saw her she was sitting in the garden of Deems Taylor, the composer. It was the most beautiful garden I had ever seen. Every flower that nature had thought of. Hannah was painting a flower. But not one of the flowers in Mr. Taylor's garden. No, she was painting a flower in a cheap pottery vase, and the flower was a crude, oversized, artificial tulip. The painting was inscribed to "Big Charlie."

Hannah wrote poetry too. It was almost like having a poet laureate in the house. Every time there was an important event Hannah would perpetuate it in rhyme. She wrote her chief work to celebrate the arrival of my mother. This was it:

Around the kitchen I creep like a mouse
High above the street in the pent house;
So I won't make any noise
Where the Thompsons live in all their pomp and poise
They have walls of pink and blue and tan—
This American lady and English gentleman.
And with them lives the lady's brother;
And soon there'll be one they'll all call Mother.

Hannah stayed with us for two years. She left, then, of her own accord, when it was discovered she was a victim of an

unpleasant disease. She had been complaining for some time of roaring pains in her head, and we sent her to a doctor. When the report came back, Dixie Tighe puzzled for three hours how she should break the news. At last she told Hannah, and Hannah smiled a proud smile.

I found out why later on. She had to have a lumbar puncture. And anything as drastic as a lumbar puncture apparently gave her extra special social standing in Harlem.

As a married man in America, I had to learn a new set of social manners.

The last court of appeal on such matters was, I found, an almost legendary character named Emily Post, a woman who seemed to have been around long enough to have arranged the table plan for the Boston Tea Party.

I couldn't possibly obey all of Miss Post's edicts. I agreed with her—and perhaps it was a little radical of me—that the time had come when it was all right for a girl to smoke. But it shocked me, as well as her, to see how many nice young American girls went to men's apartments unescorted. With my English training in suspecting the worst, I was sure that they went there for one purpose. And on the hottest summer days I always wore my coat, because I knew it was quite undignified to appear before my secretary in my shirt sleeves. I was, however, completely baffled by Miss Post's ordinances concerning the table. I mean there were so many niceties about service plates, and napkins, and never leaving the table bare. It all seemed a waste of energy, especially, as most of the guests spent their time under the table anyway.

I was terribly embarrassed at our first dinner party. The servant served Dixie Tighe, instead of our guest of honor first. But Miss Post apparently liked it that way. I tried to find out why. I was offered several explanations. Some said that it gave the hostess a chance—in case the food was tainted, poisoned, or uneatable—to have the whole business swept away. Others told me that it meant that the hostess's, and not the guests', food got cold in the long wait before everyone was served. I had my own explanation. It gave the hostess a head start, and therefore a chance to do most of the talking during the meal.

One night we had an extra-special guest. I did the carving. I always did. We Englishmen have always felt that carving is part of the insignia of office of the head of a family. American men, on the other hand, cannot carve a hunk of corned beef hash. With extreme delicacy I snipped off the portion of roast chicken that is always reserved for the guest of honor in an English home. Rather uncertainly the servant set it before the guest. I became conscious immediately of a series of high signs from Dixie Tighe. I had given the extra-special guest a wing of chicken, and apparently in America that was like giving a Hindu calves' head.

For weeks things like that happened all the time. But at last I was fairly well trained. I don't think Emily Post would have given me a blue ribbon, because I could not or would not master those absurd gymnastics with a knife and fork, but at least she wouldn't have thrown up her lily-white hands in horror.

The weather being what it is in America, it is not the fruitful subject for dinner-table conversation it was in England.

In the old days it had solved many difficulties for me. I talked about the fog, and the rain, and the bad time the farmers were having, and I did not have to think up any more small talk for an hour or more. I found no such interest in my meteorological observations in America. I would begin in my time-honored way with something like "Lovely weather we are having," and my guest would say: "Yes, but damned hot." And that was the end of that.

But there was not, I am glad to say, so much occasion for small talk. My guests usually had quite a lot to say themselves. If they were friends of Quentin Reynolds the talk often revolved around woman, and the more rudimentary phases of her existence. But normally I found the conversation on a more serious plane. It would have been no good my trying to make talk in a London drawing room by bringing up Baldwin or Lloyd George or any other politician who was in the front at that time. There always seemed to be an unwritten law that sends you to Coventry if you mentioned politics at an English dinner party. Probably because so few people know enough about politics to answer you back. But in America I found it was different. Even a ditchdigger knew enough to say "Damn Roosevelt" if Roosevelt didn't happen to be paying for the ditch, which he usually was.

Conversation did not flow smoothly and regularly, like a fast-moving but well-behaved English river. Nor was it as unemotional as that river. There would be a bubbling, roaring crescendo of talk, with everyone joining in, all talking at the same time. And then the rapids would spend themselves, and there would be silence. It was more difficult, I thought, for an American to talk when no one else was talking. Awfully

bad form, I know, but I did it too. It was the only way of getting a word in, and by that time I was no longer content to remain silent and slightly apart like a Buchmanite at a Eucharistic Congress.

I had often wondered why there were so many florists in New York. I solved the problem when I became a married householder. In London, florists are supported mainly by funerals and Anthony Eden. In New York they are supported by all men even if they have hay fever. Apparently the tradition has been carefully nursed that you must take advantage of every possible excuse to give someone a present. I mean if you are asked away for the week end you have to go out and chase around town to find something for your hostess and a toy for junior and a revolting tie for the man of the house. I should think a woman could furnish her home by having a house party. And then there's St. Valentine's Day. That calls for flowers for every girl you've ever taken into the Bewitching Caverns at Coney Island. Easter, of course. And then Mother's Day, a little piece of sticky sentiment fostered by that awful painting of Whistler and the department stores. And, more recently, Father's Day, also fostered by the department stores, but, thank Heaven, Whistler didn't paint his father. Every time someone goes away you have to give him something, and, just in case you think you are on the long end of it when you go away, you are not, because you have got to bring him something back. About the only way to remain solvent is to be an orphan leper with agoraphobia.

No wonder the American hostess puts the wrong interpretation on that good old legal phrase—"Know all men by these presents."



"I had been brought up to think that women were trained from little children to fetch men's bed slippers."

England is a man's country. An American girl once told me it would be easy to tell even if one didn't notice the slavish, downtrodden look of the women. Women, she explained, have to pay twopence to go to a comfort station. Men can go free.

America is a woman's country. I could tell that even before I was married. In America a man does not give up his seat in a bus to a woman.

It took me a long time to get used to the idea that I was no longer one of the stronger sex. I had been brought up to think that women were trained from little children to fetch men's bed slippers. I think I would have got them at my head if I had ordered Dixie Tighe to fetch mine. I was appalled to hear my wife call me a fool when I made a mistake; I was more used to be told that everyone makes mistakes sometimes, dear. It was nothing short of unseemly that my wife should want to interfere in matters like life insurance, income tax, and the balance at the bank. And it was almost grounds for divorce, when I said I thought I would go on an old-fashioned pub-crawl, and she said she would come with me.

But I soon became reconciled. And then I realized how miserable I would have been if, after living in America, I had married one of those slipper-bearing English housewives. It must be like marrying your parlormaid, and giving her the extra job of bearing your children.

I do think, though, that there should be a little more equality of the sexes in America. I mean the men should have a little more say.

CHAPTER X

IF THERE is one American city that England knows all about it is Chicago.

It is not because it is America's second largest city, nor because of its grain elevators, not because of its packing plants. It is because of its crime.

As I have said before, there is nothing an Englishman likes more than a good crime. There are so few in England, that a murder which would rate a couple of lines in an American newspaper achieves a couple of columns in our papers. There is such a scarcity of crime that we have to invent crimes to satisfy our appetites. That is why England is supreme in detective literature.

Chicago, therefore, was a gift from Heaven. We thought of Al Capone, Machine-Gun Kelly, Golf Bags McGurn, and Bugs Moran, in very much the same way as we thought of Gary Cooper, Ronald Colman, Clark Gable, and Robert Taylor. In fact, they still say "O.K., chief," in England, because they think that is how their heroes in Chicago talk.

I knew all about Chicago long before I came to America, because I was a close friend of Trevor Wignall, our sports-writer. Wignall had actually ridden in Capone's bulletproof car.

Even American gangsters believed in going-away presents.

I mean they would always spend a fortune on their victims' funerals. And Wignall dined out for weeks when he got back to London because he had a gold pencil that Spike O'Donnell had given him as a parting gift.

Spike liked Wignall, and, apparently, he gave one of his boys, a Swede, named Larsen, a hundred dollar bill with instructions that he was to buy the best gold pencil in town. Just before the train pulled out, Larsen, out of breath, burst into Wignall's room. Wignall thought for a moment that he had written something that had annoyed the mob. But Larsen just handed him a package, and said in his best party voice: "With the compliments of the boss."

After the train left, Wignall opened the package. In a nest of wool lay the pencil, inscribed to "My good friend, Trevor Wignall." Touched, Wignall took a closer look at the present. Then he saw it was rolled gold. Price—one dollar, and twenty-five cents extra for the engraving. Gunman Larsen couldn't resist the temptation to doublecross his boss for \$98.75.

I had waited in New York a long time for orders to proceed to Chicago. When they came I was scared. I wasn't sure whether I should be measured for a bulletproof vest or a coffin. If I had had anything to leave, I should have made my will. I was going to buy a gun, because I knew everyone in Chicago carried one on the hip. But I decided against it. What good was one little revolver against a barrage?

So I arrived in Chicago with nothing more formidable than a toothbrush. I decided that I would first get in touch with Spike O'Donnell. He seemed like an old friend of the family. So I told the taxi driver—from the corner of my mouth—to drive to the office of a newspaper friend of mine. I saw no

bulletproof cars. I heard no pistol shots. And not even the taxi driver said "O.K., chief."

"Can you get me in to see Spike O'Donnell?" I asked my friend, with as much awe as if I were seeking an interview with the Archbishop of Canterbury. "Get you in to see him?" he exclaimed. "The hard job will be to keep him away from you."

I asked what Spike was doing now that Repeal had removed his principal source of livelihood. "Just killing people, I suppose," I added, with studied casualness. But no. Spike had reformed. Firstly, he had given a series of public lectures, during which he had emphasized—by shaking a fist that sparkled with diamonds—that crime does not pay. Then he had decided to go legitimate. Exchanging his bulletproof vest for a demure canary waistcoat, he had become a director of a legal brewery.

My friend picked up a telephone, passed a number, and then explained to someone on the other end that there was a newspaperman from London, a friend of Trevor Wignall's, who wanted to make an appointment to meet Spike. Then he hung up. "Sorry," he said. "Spike's out of town for a week or so. Lawyer's orders."

I asked if there were any other gangsters I might meet. My newspaper friend smiled. "All in jail," he said. "Or else skipped town." A ridiculous statement, of course. Everyone knew that there were thousands of gangsters in Chicago. But my friend did not seem to want to be bothered any more, and so I dropped the subject.

Determined to establish some contact with the good old Chicago I thought I knew, I set out on a kind of pilgrimage.

First, I walked along North State Street until I came to the Holy Name Cathedral. Almost opposite the cathedral was a modest little flower shop. Just like any other little flower shop in a big city. Roses a dollar a dozen. Gladioli a dollar and a half. People passed by without even looking in the window. They had forgotten that that flower shop was a historical spot. It was there, on a bleak November day in 1924, that Dion O'Banion, big-shot bootlegger, racketeer, and swindling politician, was killed. It was there that a bloody civic war began.

No X marked the spot where Dion O'Banion died, and by dying caused a thousand other deaths. Now the spot is not even marked by the little flower shop. Its only connection with the underworld now is that it forms part of the entrance to Chicago's new subway.

The St. Valentine's Massacre. The night of February 14, 1929. A night that should have been devoted to love, not hate. Seven men, used to dealing death, lined up against a wall. Four men in front of them. Four men with guns. The crack of gunshots, and seven men, used to dealing death, were dealt death, the same kind of death by which they had lived.

I went to the scene of that massacre. It was a building standing on its own. But it was no longer a gangster's garage. It was occupied by a moving and storage company. There was a sign outside. It said: "Moving Done Quickly."

I hailed a taxicab, and told the driver to go to Cicero.

"Where to in Cicero?" he asked.

I told him to go just to Cicero.

Cicero, I remembered, was Capone's hunting ground. It was in Cicero that he kept his warehouses. It was in Cicero that

he kept many of his night clubs. It was in Cicero that he kept his women.

Cicero had an ominous sound about it, even in daylight. I would find excitement in Cicero, I was sure.

We passed through a dull, colorless suburb of the city. The houses, small and undistinguished, were drab. The people in the streets were as drab as the houses. It looked like London on a wet Sunday afternoon.

The cab stopped, and the driver said: "Here we are, cap."

"You mean this is Cicero?" I asked, incredulously.

"That's it, cap," he said.

Strangely unsatisfied with my day, I went back to the hotel. In the lobby I encountered a colleague, short, dapper S. W. Alexander, our financial editor. His mind was on higher things than mine—grain elevators, airplane finances, Samuel Insull, and so on; but I was so bored with Chicago, and so delighted to see him that I persuaded him to spend the evening with me.

We went around the town to half a dozen places. It was just like an evening in New York. In search of something new, I suggested we go to an hotel where gangsters used to stay. We walked into a bar, lit as dimly as a cinema. It took us several minutes to become accustomed to the twilight. Then I looked round for a scarred cheek, a twisted face, some snake eyes. But I could see only some nice-looking girls sipping soft drinks with their boy friends.

"You know, Alec," I said, "Chicago is just another provincial town."

"But it has the greatest packing plants in the world," said Alexander, "and the largest grain—"

"I know," I interrupted. "I know all that. But criminologically speaking, this Chicago now is as dead as Manchester or Birmingham. In fact, the whole town's as dead as Manchester or Birmingham, except that it has a few night clubs."

Alexander nodded uncertainly. He had come to Chicago looking for packing plants, not gangsters.

"Listen, Alec," I said, excitedly. "How about making sure? Let's go to some dives, and see if this town's really turned over a new leaf. Are you game?"

The financial editor looked a little doubtful. Going to dives is a little different from sipping coffee somewhere off Lombard Street. But finally he nodded.

The taxidriver thought we were lunatics. "Now take us to some place that's really tough," I said. He scratched his head. "But there ain't no such places anymore," he said. "You know it's Repeal now, don't you, mister?" I cajoled him. At last he agreed that perhaps there were a few tough places left. He drove for about half an hour.

From the outside the place looked perfect. A dark street. Dark houses on each side of it. The windows were barred and heavily curtained. The door was solid, except for a glass-covered chink. Alexander looked uncomfortable. I felt a pleasant chill, as I felt when I read Edgar Allan Poe.

A villainous-looking negro opened the door. Our hats were grabbed by a faded blonde, who was, I was sure, a retired gun moll. We were steered into a small, smoky room. The lights were low.

There was a bar, and beside it sat the perfect cast for a gangster movie. Dark, ill-shaven men, who talked out of the corner of their badly shaped mouths. Girls, all blondes, and fairly

pretty in the half-light. A manager in evening dress. A waiter who looked like Edward G. Robinson came over to us.

"What yer want?" he growled. We ordered whisky, and, when it came, we were afraid to drink it, in case it was drugged.

Two more customers arrived. A blonde, and a man with a scar on his left cheek.

The man behind the bar picked up a wicked-looking knife, and then he began to cut some ham with it. The drummer reached for his back pocket with a characteristic gesture, and then pulled out a pair of drumsticks. The lights went out.

"Here it is," I whispered across the table to Alexander. He did not answer.

But it was only the cabaret going on. A long, boring cabaret. So I asked for the bill. I had it all figured out beforehand. The waiter who looked like Edward G. Robinson would give us a bill for some colossal amount. We would protest—perhaps. He would slug us over the head, rifle our pockets, and pitch us out into the street—again, perhaps. The bill came. It was for a dollar and a half. The waiter who looked like Edward G. Robinson thanked us profusely for the tip. And so did the faded blonde, when she returned our hats. And so did the villainous-looking negro when he called us a cab.

"Well," I said to Alexander, on the way home. "If that's the toughest Chicago can provide, it looks better in the movies."

Yes, I knew all about Chicago.

As far as I know I did not see one gangster in Chicago. But I heard plenty of stories about them. I sat up all night

with Jack Woods, a young newspaperman, who specialized in gang stories. To him I was indebted for the story of Death Kiss Margaret.

Her real name is Mary Margaret Collins. Her age is about thirty-three. Her origin is dubious. Her blue eyes look as if they were made of glass just wiped off with a damp cloth. Her face is attractive much as a glacier is attractive. Her features are hard and frozen. Her lips are thin.

Her hair is changeable. Sometimes straw blonde, sometimes platinum blonde in imitation of the late Jean Harlow, sometimes brunette, sometimes black. She generally changes its color at the inception of each of her many love affairs.

She was a sweet young thing of seventeen when she first became attracted to the easy-spending satellites of New York's gangdom. But she forgot all her mother told her when she became infatuated with a young fellow named Thomas, whose last name history denies us. He dazzled her with the Broadway hot spots. She watched a gay, carefree life move before her through a haze of bathtub gin. Then Thomas met a violent death at the business end of a revolver. Mary Margaret grieved a while. But then she moved on to better things. In 1923, Chicago had made Thomas's memory as dim as the hallway lights under which he wooed her.

Mary Margaret soon found a sweetheart in Chicago. His name was Dandy Jack Sheehy, a smalltimer, but a good-looking lad, with plenty of easy money for a time. They went around the night clubs together for about three months.

Meanwhile Mary Margaret had developed a weakness. When she was in her cups—and she was in that condition fairly frequently by this time—she loved to throw lumps of

ice at piano players. If they happened to be redheaded piano players, the pastime gave her added delight.

One night she and Dandy Jack were sitting drinking gin in Chicago's Rendezvous Café. The band started playing. With a whoop of joy, Mary Margaret announced her discovery that the piano player was redheaded. "Ice," she cried. "Bring me a bowl of ice." The waiter was slow. Mary Margaret became impatient. So Dandy Jack got up and shot the waiter dead. The manager came up to protest against such unseemly destruction of his personnel, and so Dandy Jack shot him too. A policeman happened to be passing the club. Without waiting to ask questions, he whipped out his service revolver and plugged three bullets into Dandy Jack Sheehy. Mary Margaret was bereaved again.

Mary Margaret went into retirement for three months, and then emerged no longer a brunette, but a Jean Harlow blonde. In no time she had landed her prize catch, puissant Dion O'Banion.

She was riding high for a while. O'Banion was the most powerful man in Chicago, and, as his moll, Mary Margaret basked in the reflected glow of his power. But one night there was a party in a night club—the Friar's Inn this time—and Mary Margaret was in her cups again. It was a select party. O'Banion, Mary Margaret, Mike Carrozzo, chief O'Banion lieutenant, and his wife, Louis (Two Gun) Alterie, another lieutenant, and John (Jew) Bates. Mary Margaret, drunk with power and strong gin, decided to put Mrs. Carrozzo in her place. In fact, she slapped her in the face. Gallant Mr. Carrozzo resented it and slapped Mary Margaret. Bates, Alterie, and O'Banion drew their guns, but the argument was settled

peaceably. However, a few nights later an attempt was made to kill Carrozzo, and Carrozzo left the gang. And not so many days after that three men walked into Dion O'Banion's flower shop and assassinated him.

So Mary Margaret, pale and languid, became a brunette again. She was beginning to get a reputation now as a jinx girl, but she still had enough fatal fascination to attract the bad men. Johnny Phillips, an associate of Alterie, was her next beau. That was a short-lived affair and reached its customary climax in the usual night club—the Northern Lights Café this time. Mary Margaret disliked one of the entertainers. He made remarks that she resented. She told Johnny Phillips of her sentiments, and Johnny complained. To emphasize his remarks he began shooting all the electric light bulbs out of the ceiling fixtures. The management objected and called the police. There was a scuffle. In the scuffle Johnny Phillips was shot dead.

"Jew" Bates thought he could beat the jinx. He did escape it for a long time. There was a lot of unkind gossip about him after O'Banion's death, and at one time his name was connected with the St. Valentine's Massacre. But he survived that, and, more surprising still, he survived being jilted by "Death Kiss" Margaret, as she was now being called. But the jinx caught up with him months later. In 1930, he neglected to disarm a man he intended to take for a one-way ride in Covington, Kentucky. His intended victim returned from the ride, but "Jew" Bates did not.

In 1925 Mary Margaret's redheaded charms attracted a flying bootlegger, Irving (Sonny) Schlig. But Irving lasted only a week or so. Death Kiss Margaret was much more interested

in his employer, Eugene McLaughlin, whose hair was as red as hers was at that time. Death Kiss Margaret had a date with Irving at the Rendezvous Café one evening. Two days later his body was found somewhere out in the suburbs. Police were unkind enough to disturb Mary Margaret's grief by suggesting she knew something about it. She referred them to Mr. McLaughlin, who knew nothing whatever about it.

She nearly lost Eugene early in her association with him. It was New Year's Eve, and they were in the Frolics Café. There was a redheaded piano player, again, and Mary Margaret couldn't get her hands on enough ice cubes. Mr. McLaughlin pulled out his gun, and aimed at the staff. But he was a jewel robber by training, and such a poor shot that he missed. Only twenty-six, Red McLaughlin was known as the man of a hundred crimes. Mary Margaret stuck by him for nearly five years. And then one June night, in 1930, Red McLaughlin's body, weighted down with iron, was found in the canal near Summit, a suburb of Chicago.

Mary Margaret, an attractive straw blonde, took up with Sam Katz, an undistinguished hoodlum, who was brave enough, however, to flaunt the kiss of death. Shortly after they met, they were arrested together and Mr. Katz, in a gallant effort to avoid embarrassing his sweetheart, told the police that he was her chauffeur. Their romance had a momentary setback when Mary Margaret was sentenced to serve sixty days in the workhouse for stealing dresses, but they took up again when she was released. Death Kiss Margaret remained faithful to Sam until 1932, when he and two of his friends walked into the office of a gambler they had intended to blackmail and were killed.

Now Death Kiss Margaret's story departs from routine. When her time of mourning for Sam Katz had expired, she fell in love with Sol (Bulldog) Feldman, an expert in assault and battery, because he had a habit of gripping his opponent's ear in his strong teeth and hanging on until victory was his.

Mary Margaret was at a loose end when Bulldog came along. She still had her looks, and she still had her winning ways. But Chicago's gangsters, susceptible as they were, decided they wanted to live a little longer. They warned Bulldog. He laughed at them. A man who bites other men's ears is not naturally superstitious. He told them that not only would he survive the jinx but that he would live to kiss another woman.

"What did we tell yer?" said the bad men, when six months later Bulldog was shot and seriously wounded just after he had stolen a fur coat from a shop window for his sweetheart. Bulldog was taken to the hospital, and Mary Margaret solicitously sat by his bedside. To everyone's surprise he recovered completely.

Bulldog and Mary Margaret were happy in their way. Repeal came, and most of the more important gangsters went to jail or lost their money, and Bulldog had no opposition. But he made the mistake of asking his sweetheart to his young sister's wedding. Mary Margaret had too much champagne. Late in the evening she danced with another man.

Bulldog knew only one way to deal with a situation like that. After all, he was an expert at assault and battery. So he grabbed a beer bottle, and broke it over Mary Margaret's head. It would have been perfectly all right with everybody, including Death Kiss Margaret, if three chivalrous doctors, guests

at the wedding, had not been filled with indignation that a man should be allowed to get away with assaulting American womanhood. They fell upon Bulldog, and Bulldog could not get his teeth into them. They broke half a dozen of his ribs, bruised him all over, and nearly gouged out one of his eyes.

Through a mass of bandages, Bulldog told Death Kiss Margaret that she had brought him enough trouble, and that he was through.

A few days later he was arrested in a bungalow hideout on suspicion of having murdered Louis (Two Gun) Alterie. "You haven't escaped the jinx yet," his friends reminded him. But Bulldog squirmed out of that trouble too. Very soon he was back in Chicago's night clubs with another girl. The Death Kiss had failed.

And Death Kiss Margaret, demurely raven-haired now, unable to rouse enough spirit to throw ice cubes at even a red-headed piano player, is still looking wistfully for another beau.

CHAPTER XI

AMERICAN SOCIETY was not nearly as hidebound as I expected it to be. It was clothbound instead. I mean the names of those who belonged were neatly catalogued in a little book so that a hostess could always be certain that the man on her right wasn't something awful like an actor.

In England you are born with blue blood. If your ancestor didn't kill a lot of Yorkshiremen in the Wars of the Roses you have little chance of getting much more than a dash of geranium in your veins. But in America the mysterious editors of the Social Register can inject blue blood into you with a few drops of fountain pen ink. They squiggle your name on the proofs of their booklet, and from then on your blood runs indigo—unless you marry a film star or take up wrestling or become an angel of Father Divine.

The Social Register ignores, with the sublime arrogance that is typical of it, the fact that most of its best names belonged not so long ago to people in humble circumstances. The Four Hundred, or at least a thousand of them, did not come to America, as so many of us imagine, in the world's largest ship, the *Mayflower*. Most of them came steerage.

Take the Astors and the Vanderbilts, America's two first families. Well, the Astors, not so many generations ago, were hardboiled, if enterprising, fur trappers. And surely it has not

been forgotten that crabby, old Commodore Vanderbilt ran a ferryboat between Staten Island and Manhattan Island. And old John D. Rockefeller's father was a wandering patent medicine peddler, whose most successful line was a dubious cancer cure. Some of the social registerites are not even a full generation removed from the soil, the garage, the workshop, the shoeshine parlor, or the steerage of the immigrants' boat from Central Europe. Even Maury Paul, who, as Cholly Knickerbocker, is the Emily Post of the cream of American Society, used to be in trade, although, of course, he did sell *cultured* pearl necklaces.

Don't get me 'wrong. I am not a snob, even if I do come from a country which regards a man with a ten million dollar department store as a tradesman. I think it is fine that a boy who once sold newspapers now has millions. But I think he should remember that he used to sell the whole newspaper, not just the Society page.

There is one lapse from the state of social grace that the publishers of the Social Register overlook—divorce. Of course, if they followed the example of the British Court and banned divorces, their nice, fat, little book would be cut down to the size of the free list in Izzy Cohen's store. Because I am always reading in the papers sentences like this: "Among those present were Mrs. John B. Smythe, and her son, Mr. William Wilhelmstein."

Social climbing is as popular a sport in America as mountain climbing in Switzerland. There are those who are not in Society who spend more money than the New Deal trying to get into Society. They hire press agents to get their names in the Society columns, and, failing that, in the Broadway col-

umns. They engage social secretaries. They buy lavish homes in lavish Palm Beach. They give endless cocktail parties hoping that one day someone who matters will accept their invitation. Usually their pains get them nothing. But sometimes they climb to the first ledge of the social mountain and are admitted into the ranks of Café Society, which is rather like a nouveau riche in England striving for a baronetcy and gaining an O.B.E. But they are never satisfied, always trying to climb higher, beyond the first ledge. The Social Register could, in fact, divide those who do not adorn its nice, white pages into two classes—social lepers and social leapers.

It is through their daughters that Society women seem to achieve the heights of their social ambitions. When their girls are seventeen or so, they prepare to loose them in droves upon their own little world. There are no Royal Courts at which they can appear; the President is interested in them only for how much income tax he can extract from them. So they must provide their own coming-out party, and make their debut before their own kind.

A nice little party is arranged for them at one of the better hotels. There may be just a hundred guests, or there may be a thousand. The ballroom is usually extensively decorated with flowers, and most of the other debutantes of the season are invited just so that they may see that this party puts their parties in the shade, my dear. There is usually a shortage of men; and so a list of youths, presentable enough, according to Social Register standards, and the proud possessors of tails, is at hand, and from it can be selected twenty-five, fifty, or a hundred, "stags," according to how many blushing, little wall-flowers are expected.

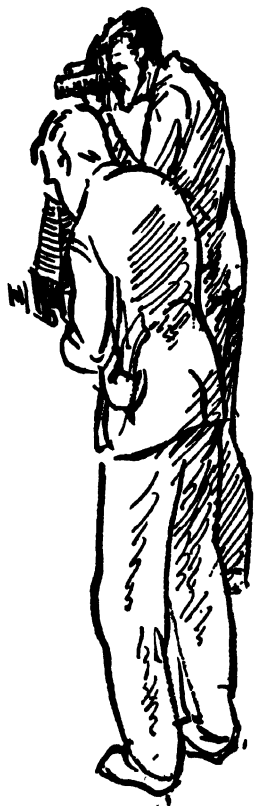
The debutante, dressed in expensive white, stands at the head of the receiving line and is presented to all the guests, who have probably known her for years. Then there is supper, champagne, and soda pop. Then dancing. Then breakfast. Then bed, and an early awakening to read—as if she were an actress after a first night—what the morning papers have to say about the party. From then on, the fully-fledged “deb” is in the marriage market.

Every season in New York there is a deb of debbs, a glamour girl so sensational, so photogenic, as the word is, that you simply cannot pick up a paper or weekly magazine without staring at her face. It is usually possible to spot the No. 1 girl of the season in the summer before her coming-out. There are pictures of her in a bathing suit at some swanky beach on Long Island. Or she wins a prize in a horse show. The build-up has begun.

Comes fall. The publicity starts in earnest then. She spends every evening doing the rounds of the cafés. She doesn't drink, and she just nibbles at a shrimp. But late hours have already made her a chain smoker. There is always a cameraman somewhere near her. He snaps her drinking a soft drink through a straw, dancing an elegant tango, smiling into the eyes of a young man, arriving at the opera, departing from the horse show, trying on a new dress. About the only thing she does away from a lens is to have a bath.

The first ball of the season arrives. It is positive then that she is the deb of the season. She wears a more sensational dress than any of the others, and there are half a dozen open-mouthed young men following her wherever she goes.

There is usually a court case around about this time. The



"About the only thing she does away from a lens is to have a bath."

trustees of her ten or fifteen million dollar estate think she is spending too much money. Her mother argues that such expenses are the cost of her station. I think they must be the cost of the Grand Central Station.

Her coming-out party is the talk of the town. Everyone who matters is there. About two thousand guests. The floral decorations are most unusual. A Society florist has made them look as little like flowers as possible. And the debutante looks simply divine. With a smiling face but aching feet she dances through the night. The party is a sensational success. It is a front page story in almost every paper in the country.

It is a hard winter for our champion debutante. Night clubs every night. Parties every week. Hours devoted to hairdressers. Hours devoted to milliners. The spotlight frazzles her nerves. Sometimes, perhaps, she tells her adoring mother to go to blazes. Sometimes she envies an ordinary girl, who can get some sleep when she wants to.

And then the summer comes. The party is over. On a swimming float somewhere off Long Island an eligible young man tells her he loves her. Her little band of escorts desert her. Around October her engagement is announced. Comes the season again. There is a new glamour girl. Our little debutante still goes around the night clubs, with a permanent escort now. But the waiters hardly know her this season. There is sometimes difficulty getting a table. She gets married. A nice, fashionable wedding. And she hurriedly produces offspring. She hopes it will be a girl, so that seventeen winters hence she may have all the fun her mother had bringing her out.

I thought on those things, as the train took me toward the fortress of more conservative American Society, the small

town of Newport, Rhode Island. It is a drawn-out journey to Newport. First you take a train to Providence, and then, unless you are someone who has a chauffeur to meet you, a bus for an interminable journey along the shore. Perhaps they made Newport inaccessible on purpose.

Fortress seemed the right word, as I journeyed along the shore to Newport. There had been a vicious strike in those parts, and every street corner was guarded by National Guardsmen with fixed bayonets and steel helmets.

I stayed in Newport at what was probably the worst hotel in America. I have been in some bad hotels in England, with their freezing women room clerks in the lobby, and their freezing water in large earthenware pitchers in the bedrooms. But never have I seen the equal of this Newport hostelry. I was rapidly becoming Americanized, and therefore of the opinion that I was slumming if I did not have a private bath with my hotel room. But there was only one bathroom to a floor in this hotel. The bed was of brass and noisy. The mattress was crinkled like a much-enlarged photograph of old John D. Rockefeller's face. They told me proudly that Edward VII stayed there, when he visited Newport as Prince of Wales. They must have kept the place exactly as it was then as a memorial of that honor.

Newport itself looked as old and shabby as the hotel. Except for the Western Union office and a cafeteria or two, I would have thought it was a run-down fishing village somewhere in Devonshire. It consisted principally of a narrow main street, bordered by low, gray buildings. The street was called Thames Street, but the natives tried to make you pronounce it phonetically. Extending off Thames Street, like oars from a racing

shell, was a series of grubby side streets, reaching on one side to the waterfront and on the other to a highway. Most of their houses seemed to be second-rate boarding houses.

On the outskirts of the town, however, the rows of boarding houses disappeared, and in their place were trim, little tea shops, antique stores, grocery shops full of caviare, squabs, imported game, and other delicacies. Still further on, the street widened, and on each side of it there was an estate. No 100 x 100 lots for the old guard of America's Society. But wide, sweeping driveways ribboning their way through lawns that did not need "Keep off the Grass" signs. White mansions just visible through the foliage of priceless specimen trees. Estate after estate. Mansion after mansion. The Astors and the Vanderbilts. The rulers of America.

But each house looked as if it were standing there, all washed and dried, waiting for the master to come home. I did not see a sign of life in any of them. Truly, these stately homes were fortresses.

On my way back to the hotel, I saw a crowd standing round a car parked outside the Muenchinger-King. An accident, I thought. But no, they were just staring at the car. It was an English car, a low-slung, fairly inexpensive model, which was popular at that time in England among those who demanded flashiness. It was virgin white. Fitted with every gadget the inventiveness of man had at that time perfected. And plastered across its front were about thirty badges of international automobile associations. It was the season's sensation at Newport.

It belonged, I found, to an Englishman named Captain Leonard Plugge.

If his car was a sensation, Captain Plugge himself was a good second. He was not a sensation because he was about the only man dressed in immaculate yachting costume—white-topped cap, white ducks, and blue double-breasted jacket, with gold buttons decorated with little anchors—nor because he did more entertaining than the bigwigs of Newport, nor even because he hired a derelict young Englishman as a social secretary. But because, when he found that that young Englishman had left behind him a paper trail of bills and bad checks, he paid every one of those bills, and made good every one of those bad checks, rather than see the fair name of England besmirched.

Mrs. Joseph Davies, wife of the American Ambassador to Russia at that time, was represented in the harbor by a four-master—thirteen times larger than the *Mayflower*—that Grape Nuts had earned her. It was so large that columnist Westbrook Pegler once said that even its lifeboats carried lifeboats. The vessel was under power throughout the fortnight, because it was so much trouble to hoist the sails. But one afternoon a guest, looking up from the deck, said whimsically that the *Sea Cloud* must look very beautiful with its sails set. Mrs. Davies sent for somebody, and that somebody blew a whistle. In a split second, seventy-two men appeared from the vessel's innards and shinnied up the rigging. In five minutes the sails were set. It took those seventy-two men nearly an hour to bring the sails in again.

Wherever I went in Newport, there was a Vanderbilt. Young Vanderbilts and old Vanderbilts. There was old General Cornelius Vanderbilt, sire of the clan, following the International Yacht Races in the *Winchester*, a yacht built

like a destroyer, which had to be throttled down except when it was chasing Banker J. P. Morgan's *Corsair*. And there was young Cornelius Vanderbilt, so anxious to be a real reporter that he left a party in full evening dress to row out to the *Endeavour* and try to confirm by feeling her hull whether she had blisters there. And there was, of course, unlikeable but efficient Mike Vanderbilt, who sailed the victorious *Rainbow* just as he played bridge—with soulless perfection.

There were not nearly so many Astors. In fact, I saw only one of them—surly, young John Jacob Astor III, the last of the dynasty. It had been a romantic time for the Astor family. Mother and son had been married. Mother, in defiance of the blue-penciling editors of the *Social Register*, had married a prizefighter, who was not even a successful prizefighter—handsome Enzo Fiermonte. Son had nearly married pretty Eileen Gillespie, quarreled and demanded the return of his engagement ring, and married her best friend, equally pretty Ellen Tuck French. Acquiring on the one hand a prizefighting stepfather, he soon found he had acquired on the other hand a cab-driving father-in-law. When portly Francis French found that a book debunking Newport Society did not keep the big bad wolf from the door, he bought a taxicab and a driver's cap, and plied for hire. But he failed even at that. He should have known that everyone in Newport has his own car.

Perhaps these troubles accounted for John Jacob Astor's distraction. Anyway, when he came off the tender onto a landing stage, with arms behind his back and eyebrows struggling to touch his cheekbones, he pushed his fragile wife on one side to reach the gangplank, and walked away to his car without looking back to see if she followed him.

To crash through the bulwarks of American Society without any undue trouble, you should have a title. It doesn't matter—for a month or two at any rate—if it is a phoney title. Sometimes you can put yourself over on a permanent basis by admitting that the title is phoney. Look at Prince Mike Romanoff, for instance. Everyone knows he is not the last of the Romanoffs, and that his father was a not very talented tailor. But Prince Mike has such a charming, well-mannered way of asking for a drink, a dinner, or a hundred dollars, that few can refuse him. And in the old days, Prince Mike Romanoff probably went to as many parties as strictly authentic Prince Serge Obolensky.

But a real title will take you a long way. Hostesses will go to the most underhanded lengths to grab you by the handle to your name. As long as you do not spill too much soup on your white waistcoat and do not develop an American accent too early in your stay, you will probably land an heiress. Failing that, of course, there is always Hollywood.

With all their interest in titles, it is strange that most Americans have not overcome a complete confusion about their use. I mean the papers nearly always refer to the arrival of Sir John Smith under a headline something like this: "Royalty arrives on the *Queen Mary*." Sir John Smith will find that he is almost invariably called Sir Smith, instead of Sir John. Lord Smith, on the other hand, will be addressed with more variety. Sometimes he will be called Lord John, but later in the evening it would be quite in order for someone suddenly to decide to call *him* Sir Smith.

I had given Dixie Tighe a long and complete coaching on the subject of titles. She had been a promising pupil, and, in

spite of her determined persistence in confusing Balliol, which is a college, with the Old Bailey, which is a criminal law court, I had great confidence in her.

Some of that confidence vanished on the day she arrived to join me in Newport. She went over to a table occupied by the *Endeavour's* afterguard to find out the truth of some very technical point brought up during the day's race. One of the men gave her some very authoritative information. Wanting to have his name for the story she asked him for it. "Ratsey," he said. After all, it was his name, and he was a very famous sails expert. Dixie wiggled in her chair. "Me," she said, pointing to herself, "me—Mickey Mouse."

But a calamity occurred the next day while we were out in the patrol boat *Norsaga*, watching the race. On board was a very serious young man from Balliol, Sir Anthony Jenkinson, Bart. He had come to America as a student, and in the ardor of his studies he overcame his natural English diffidence and spoke to Dixie. I think he thought she was one of those American sob sisters he had read about in novels. They got on splendidly, and then I overheard her asking him how long since he had been at the Old Bailey. Sir Anthony did not flinch. Presently, Dixie brought him over to introduce him to me.

"I would like to introduce you," she said, "to Bart."

Bart! I thought she was joking, and I looked for a smile. But she was perfectly serious, and she kept on calling him "Bart" until I thought the poor man would have high blood pressure.

Later I took her on one side, and asked her with some abruptness what was the use of all my coaching.

"I thought you called them," she said, "by the thing at the end of their name." ¶

CHAPTER XII

I ALWAYS wanted to be a lawyer.

When I was at school I used to picture myself wearing a powdered wig and silk gown towering above a jury which was listening to every beautiful word I spoke. Also when I was at school I had a slight difference with Euclid. So I was unable to pass any of the necessary examinations. In later life, however, I retained a great respect for the profession that turned me down.

There was many a politician at whom I would have gladly thumbed my nose, but an English judge I revered. I regarded them as beings on a different plane, impartial and incorruptible as stone. They had to eat and drink like the rest of us, but I felt that they did such commonplace things so that, by living like us lowlier beings, they could be more fair in their judgments upon us. That was the only way I could reconcile myself to such supermen having to comb their hair or fiddle with their back studs.

I had no such feeling about the American bench. Without wigs or ermine, they looked in their black gowns more like schoolmasters, and in my eyes schoolmasters were made to be ribbed. I couldn't see how they could be incorruptible, because they depended upon parties and people for their positions. From what I could hear, most of them thought the bench was like the one the substitutes sit on during a football game.

They couldn't wait for their chance to come out into the field and put on a great show.

I did not find it hard to believe the story I was told of one New York judge, who took the word bar a little too literally and brought his own bottle of Scotch into court. One day he was hearing a long, tedious murder trial. The hot summer air and a few too many calls to the bar had made him sleepy. He snoozed.

A girl was on the witness stand. Counsel was trying to establish that she saw the alleged murderer in a speakeasy on the night of the crime. At the word speakeasy the judge came to. With keen interest he leaned over the bench, and told counsel he would take over the questioning of the witness.

"What speako?" he asked.

The girl said she had forgotten its name.

"Was it Mario's?" asked the judge. No. "Johnny's?" No. "Fitzgerald's?" No.

He ordered the girl to describe it. She said that it had a green door, and a small foyer inside with pegs for hats and coats, and a door to the left, and—

"Ah!" exclaimed the judge, with a satisfied smile. "It was Pietro's." And then he went off to sleep again.

In England I had always considered contempt of court a most heinous crime. In America there seemed to be more contempt for the court than of it.

Everyone said the Hauptmann trial would be a circus. It was.

One day, Flemington, New Jersey, was a sleepy, agricultural town: a handful of yokels strolling along its Main Street; a few butter and egg buyers living in its hotel; a few drunks

and traffic violators in the prisoner's chair in its white steepled courthouse. And next day Flemington was a hippodrome.

There wasn't a room to be bought in the hotel. There wasn't even a room to be bought in a private house. Main Street looked more like Broadway. Reporters, cameramen, special writers, columnists, tittle-tattlers, criminologists, broadcasters, they were all there.

In the courthouse telegraph engineers worked night and day installing wire rooms. Through their efforts there were soon facilities for handling millions of words, words for New York, words for Chicago, words for San Francisco, words for London, words for Tokyo, words for Montreal, words for Paris, words for everywhere save Germany. And near the courthouse radio engineers worked night and day putting up transmitters and microphones so that the housewife sweeping her living room, the traveling salesman driving his car, and the office worker propping up the mantelpiece with his slippered feet, might listen to a running commentary on the Trial of the Century—by courtesy of Tutchurtoze Reducing Tonic.

Very different, all these preparations for the organs of public opinion, from what I was used to. Slinking to a telephone in a grocery store half a mile from the courthouse. Taking care to give the defendant just as much space as the prosecution. Not even describing the prisoner's eyes in case it should prejudice him.

Very different, too, were the hours immediately before the trial. An English reporter would have as much difficulty interviewing a barrister on the eve of a trial as the Berlin correspondent of the *Jewish Daily Forward* would have in getting a scoop from Hitler. These American lawyers not only talked

to reporters beforehand. They blurted out their whole case over the radio. I was afraid that by the time the trial opened there would be nothing more to write.

Before Hauptmann was brought to court, dapper, beak-nosed David Wilentz, the Attorney General for New Jersey, was already calling him a snake-eyed monster, as guilty as hell, who might as well get ready for the hot seat right now. And his opponent, red-faced, blustery Edward Reilly, boasting that he had never lost a client to the electric chair, was barking into a microphone to the housewives, the commercial travelers, and the office workers, his promise that he would show them something, that he would prove that not Hauptmann but so-and-so and so-and-so were the kidnapers of the Lindbergh baby. It was all a dream to me. At any moment I expected to find that Hauptmann was Hitler in disguise.

I was surprised they didn't charge admission for the opening. They did issue tickets. I had one. A red ticket, which entitled me to Seat No. 7 in Row No. 2. A state trooper, in a uniform of powder blue, examined the tickets at the door, and, like an usher, showed me to my seat. If there had been a little more talking I should have thought I was at a Broadway first night. A noted actress, a playwright or two, the columnists, novelists in droves, a prizefighter and his wife, and scores of mink-coated matrons. They all had their red tickets too.

An invisible curtain went up. The principals entered, and a murmur of comment from the audience greeted each of them. Lindbergh bareheaded and frozen-faced as usual. Mrs. Lindbergh, frail, shy, and looking as if she were not sure where she was.

Mrs. Hauptmann took her seat by the defense table. A plain, ordinary woman. A cook on her day off, you would have said, had you not seen the expression in her eyes, and the determined keep-up-a-good-front look on her face. And then Hauptmann came in. I thought the audience was going to hiss, as they used to hiss the man with the drooping mustache in the old melodramas.

The attorneys could not surprise me after their eve-of-trial tactics. So I hardly noticed that they wore gray and brown suits, instead of black coats and tramline trousers, or that their heads were bare instead of wigged. Wilentz swaggered and posed as if he were making a screen test for the role of district attorney in a gang film. Reilly, more redfaced than ever, sniffed at the white carnation in his buttonhole. I asked myself what an English judge would have said to a lawyer who came into court wearing a carnation.

When Lindbergh and Mrs. Lindbergh had given their evidence, the lawyers warmed up to their job. They abused witnesses. They abused each other. They abused even the judge. English barristers have a subtle way of telling the judge he doesn't know what he's talking about. With silky smoothness they say "Perhaps, m'lud, I may presume to suggest," or, "If his ludship will graciously permit me to point out." There was none of that in Flemington. When the attorneys disapproved of the bench's ruling, they almost said "you stink."

In England, too, the lawyers have even a gracious manner of calling each other damned fools. They will say "I am afraid my learned friend is not fully aware of the question at issue." If I had heard one of the Hauptmann lawyers talk of his "learned friend" I should have thought he was trying to be funny.

There were, it seemed, two ways to confound a witness: to ask him so many questions about nothing in particular that he forgot some perfectly trivial fact, and then you could accuse him of having a bad memory or of being a downright liar; or to scream at him at the top of your lungs so that he became frightened and confused, and you could still accuse him of a bad memory, or an evasion of the truth. Both were to be recommended to discredit any witness of lowly standing. But neither method should be used with a witness of the caliber of Colonel Lindbergh. Excellent subjects for browbeating were cashiers of movie palaces, farmers' wives, bakers' assistants, plumbers, and—sometimes—country policemen.

The days flew by, and the show became, if possible, better. More actresses, more mink coats came to Flemington. It was unfashionable not to have watched, for one day at least, this hopeless struggle of a man for his life.

Then the trial became dull. Experts came to the stand. Expensive experts, but the State of New Jersey did not mind. Such expensive experts that the impoverished defense could not afford to produce any impressive enough to confound them.

The mink coats got restless. There was chatter in the courtroom. Members of the smart audience began to fix their hair and their complexions. Books and magazines were brought into the courtroom. Court officers were called with beckoning finger, and asked to "open the window, please, officer darling." One woman brought her knitting. Even the reporters were bored, and sent rude notes to each other, drew crude caricatures of the prisoner and his wife, and chewed sweetmeats and candy.

After weeks of testimony that did not bring out one new

fact, the audiences became more commonplace. Flemington went out of fashion. But a new mob began making the ghoul-ish pilgrimage—the picnic mob. Guides brought them, and showed them the bars of Hauptmann's cell. They might have been pointing to Henry VII's tomb. The more morbid tourists tried to scratch their names on Hauptmann's car, parked outside the courthouse. Hawkers moved among them. They sold kidnap ladders—crude reproductions of the ladder that was propped against the courtroom wall all through the trial—and people fought to get them autographed, chasing with pens and pencils after the judge, the lawyers, the witnesses, even Mrs. Hauptmann. Book ends, wallets, handkerchiefs, all marked "Flemington, N. J.," were sold in thousands. Names were carved in the courtroom furniture. Something like "Sammy loves Sarah" was etched across my desk. Chips were shaved off the chairs, the jury box, the hotel opposite. And lawyer Reilly had some new stationery printed. It had a red kidnap ladder for the letterhead.

Then the show moved toward its climax. Reilly made his final speech to the jury, a piece of oratory upon which Mr. Reilly depended.

He was brilliant. Emotional but restrained. For a few moments I felt I was back in England. And then Wilentz rose to his feet. With tears for the Lindberghs in his voice one minute and hatred for Hauptmann in his voice the next minute, he bombarded the jury for hours.

World's Public Enemy No. 1. Snake. Lowest creature on earth. He hurled the words with a tongue curved like the basket of a pelota player at the man who remained cold and passionless under nearly all his invective.

"The most venomous snake would pass that child by," screamed Wilentz. "An American gangster would not take it. It had to be a fellow with icewater in his veins, a fellow who thought he was bigger than Lindy. Yes. He's cold. But he'll thaw out when he hears that switch on that electric chair."

I shuddered and felt sick. I looked round, but no one else seemed to flinch. I supposed they were more used to it than I.

Wilentz, striking a dozen poses, shook his fist at Hauptmann, and then introduced an entirely new theory of how Hauptmann had killed the Lindbergh baby, a theory for which not one morsel of evidence had been presented, a theory, in fact, which the prosecution had discarded before the trial began. I waited for a thunderbolt from the Bench, a thunderbolt which at home would have singed the wig of every barrister in town. None came.

At last Hauptmann's fate was left to the jury, a jury of men and women. Long before there was a verdict, the public had made up its mind. They were crying outside: "He's guilty; let him burn." The newspapers were crying for his blood. On the radio criminologists were pointing out the danger of Hauptmann's acquittal. Mob hysteria, that most dangerous of all emotions, which in the less enlightened South would, I was sure, have brought a lynching long before this, was spreading. There were crowds outside the courthouse. Crowds who wanted their blood lust satisfied.

By contrast there was a merry scene inside the courtroom. Messenger boys, relieved for a few hours from their endless errands with newspaper copy, were turned into waiters, and sent for coffee and soft drinks for the reporters. There were cigarette ends all over the floor. Reilly sat in the witness chair,

trying on a telegraph boy's hat. Once more he yelled across the courtroom to Wilentz, but now it was a friendly yell. "We'll go to Florida," he said, "and lay the ransom notes on a good horse."

"Yes," answered Wilentz, excitedly, "and we'll try and find a horse called 'Electric Chair.'" Reilly, who not so long ago had been calling this man a liar, roared with jovial laughter.

Then Reilly began singing. Another defense lawyer started a dice game. Someone began throwing paper darts from the gallery. And suddenly a bell began tolling. It was the signal. The jury had reached its verdict.

There was a roar of disappointment outside when it became known that one of the press associations had sent out a verdict favorable to Hauptmann. But there was a cheer a few moment later when that verdict was denied. Then there was silence.

Hauptmann, given back his braces and his tie and his shoelaces, was led back into court. He tried to smile when he looked at his wife. The judge sat on his bench. The jury filed in. Their faces betrayed them. Two of the women were fighting back tears. The foreman need not have bothered to whisper, "Guilty." Slips of paper, passed by reporters under the locked doors, gave the news to the waiting mobs. Guilty. Hooray! Hooray! Hauptmann turned a pale yellow when the death sentence was announced. Hooray! Hooray! Mrs. Hauptmann collapsed. Hooray! Hooray!

That was a wild night in Flemington. There were parties all over town. People were as excited as if they had just been told their salaries had been raised. One reporter in the Union Hotel went crazy and ran around the place paging himself.

At last the reporters began to move away. Suitcases and trunks were trundled down Main Street to the station. The telegraph wires were torn down.

The last to leave were the souvenir hunters. They grabbed more shavings from the courtroom, cones from a pine tree which had been an exhibit in evidence, chairs that had been occupied by famous people. They took away all the reporters' desks. Someone said he was going to varnish mine and use it as a bar.

Gradually Flemington, a fantasy town, became its sleepy self again. The butter and egg men came back. The yokels took over Main Street once more. And the drunks and traffic violators took Bruno Richard Hauptmann's place in the defendant's chair, in the white, steepled courthouse.

American justice had been done....

Fourteen months passed. Fourteen months, during which the case of the People of the State of New Jersey versus Bruno Richard Hauptmann, carpenter, broke all records for sensations.

Colonel Charles Lindbergh chose to become an exile from his own land, because he was hounded by photographers trying to obtain exclusive pictures of his second son, Jon. A midnight visit was paid to Death Row by New Jersey's Governor, pudgy Harold Hoffman, so that he might convince himself of his belief that Hauptmann was not guilty. Ellis Parker, a rustic model of Sherlock Holmes, produced a disbarred barrister who perjured himself by confessing that he, and not Hauptmann, kidnaped the Lindbergh baby. Parker was arrested. Defense Counsel Edward Reilly went to a lunatic asylum. And all the time the Germans of New York paid a

voluntary tax on everything they bought to finance the unearthing of new evidence to assist Hauptmann.

Faithful Mrs. Hauptmann, unrecognizable now as the plumpish, neat-looking housewife she had been at the beginning of the trial, pursued the mirage of that new evidence until late in the afternoon of April 3, 1936. Tired but hopeful that she had obtained a clue or two which would force another stay of execution, she went to lie down in her Trenton hotel. Toward dusk a minister, who had turned detective in her behalf, came and sat with her. They waited for the messengers to come with the news that Hauptmann would not die that night.

Knitting in her hotel room Mrs. Hauptmann realized that hope was gone as soon as the photographers burst open the door, and took her picture. "God, why did you do that to me?" she cried. They took her picture again. Hiding her eyes from the exploding flashlights, the widow of Bruno Richard Hauptmann ran into the bathroom and locked the door.

"Leave me alone!" she screamed from her sanctuary. "We've got to get some more pictures," cried the photographers.

Mrs. Hauptman refused to come out, so they went downstairs to borrow the pass key. They opened the bathroom door and took pictures until Mrs. Hauptmann collapsed. They took a last picture of that and then left her to her grief.

American justice was done....

The police of America need never suspect me of a murder. They need never suspect me of any crime. If what I saw in Flemington was a sample of what I might expect I shall be a model citizen for always.

CHAPTER XIII

BEFORE the *Berengaria* was a day's run out of New York, I discovered that I had lost my English accent.

It was the first time in months that I had thought much about myself. There had been too much going on around me in America for me to wonder, as I did in the old days, if people were smiling at the way I wore my hat. Because I had plenty to talk about, I no longer stuttered and blushed when I was introduced to a stranger. I could even carry on a fairly intelligent conversation with a woman I hadn't met before.

So when I sat back in my cabin with time at last to indulge in the popular English sport of self-examination, I was surprised at the changes in myself. Two years before, I had arrived in a strange country with about as much armor against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune as a softshell crab. I was as ingrown as a street-walker's toenail. Now I looked as if I was a normal human being.

I was interested to establish, however, whether the cure was permanent or only effective while I was within range of America's enlivening atmosphere.

A slight swell incapacitated Dixie Tighe for most of the voyage. I was asked to remove myself from the cabin because my habit of rocking backward and forward in a chair and my consumption of large quantities of sickening candy made



"I was asked to remove myself from the cabin..."

her feel worse. So I made the rounds of the ship alone, and, without her support, attended a cocktail party given by the chief steward. In the old days I would have shunned the party. In the old days I would have been distressed for some time afterward because the Earl of Warwick snubbed me. In the old days I would have been glad that Dr. A. J. Cronin's conversation enabled me to remain tongue-tied and unobserved in a corner of the cabin. But now I went to the party with some eagerness, thought with some amusement how annoyed the Earl of Warwick must have been in New York at hearing himself called the Earl of Wore-wick, and fought Dr. Cronin with typical American tenacity for control of the conversation.

Comforted by the confession of Staff Captain Beal that he had been seasick on the first night of every voyage he had made in thirty years, Dixie recovered in the last day or two, and was able to take a little nourishment in the form of caviare and crêpes suzettes at every meal except breakfast. She was wildly excited at the prospect of landing for the first time in Europe. But she was no more excited than I.

We reached Cherbourg in the early morning. We could not sleep, and so at about four in the morning I rang for a steward and asked him for sandwiches and milk. I suddenly remembered with some surprise that on my journey to America I did not dare to ask the steward to bring me dinner in my room. How strange of me, I thought.

I was delighted to find that I no longer felt a suspected criminal when I confronted the customs men at Southampton. In former days I would have meekly paid the duty on my camera, but now I argued with them quite roughly. I did

not pay the duty. They pointed to a carton of sweets someone had given me as a joke for a going-away present. "Sweets?" asked the officer. "Just candy," I said, translating his word into American by force of habit. I think he decided then that I was an American. Anyway his brusqueness disappeared, and he passed the rest of our baggage with such cursory glances that he could not possibly have thought I was an Englishman.

London hadn't changed very much. Same old taxicabs. Same old Whitehall. Same dingy, shabby old Strand. I bought a newspaper, and the politicians were saying the same old things. I walked down Shaftesbury Avenue, and the theaters were housing the same old plays. I walked down Bond Street, and the shops were displaying the same old goods at the same old prices.

And yet I had changed. A building that I had once thought a magnificent edifice was more like a bungalow. Piccadilly, which I had upheld against all the supporters of Broadway, looked like Main Street in a small city. The Strand reminded me of the Bowery. The girls seemed shabby and dowdy. Their clothes looked as if they had been fitted in a pea-soup fog. Their legs were too big, like Queen Anne tables with elephantiasis.

I had a feeling of waiting for things to get started—such as I feel during a dull drawing-room comedy. London, slow, easy-going, and as quiet as a duchess drinking soup, gave me a let-down after two years of roaring, nervous New York.

I was no more at home than my American wife. I felt like a tourist. When Arthur Christiansen jokingly pointed out the sights—the Houses of Parliament, St. Paul's, and Westmin-

ster Abbey (which had once been my school chapel)—I had to prevent myself from nodding politely and saying: "Yes, very beautiful."

Any foreigner, except possibly a Greek, feels superior to everyone else as soon as he leaves his native land. Perhaps it was the feeling that I was a stranger to London which helped me maintain my newly gained self-confidence. I was no longer able to stand by a bar in silence for a whole evening. I was no longer shy of meeting people. I was even able to keep my head up when Trevor Wignall induced comedian Tom Walls to make a speech on the occasion of my wedding anniversary in the middle of the crowded Savoy Grill.

I had left London an undistinguished executive, but I found that I had returned a glamour boy. London at that time was just beginning to become Americanized. An icebox, a waffle iron, a package of Chesterfield cigarettes, gave you a stamp in London in those days. If you were a good English dancer no one cared, but if you were a mediocre American dancer you were at the top of the bill. I was a reporter in New York. I rubbed shoulders with cowboys, red Indians, and gangsters. And so I had glamour.

On the first day I was asked to tell about the cowboys. Hollywood westerns must have made a much more lasting impression on English audiences than the Park Avenue comedies. Half the dear old ladies who peer into a frightening world through the aspidistra plants on the window sills of their suburban homes really believed that New Yorkers wore ten-gallon hats and half-grown fur coats on their legs. Their eyes grew as round as soup plates when I said I had never seen a cowboy. I was sure they didn't believe me.

It was the same about the red Indians. A newspaper colleague, in America for a busman's holiday, was not a bit surprised when some statistics showed him that most of the survivors of the redskinned race were concentrated in Washington. In fact, he wrote a glowing little piece about them, and how the President was guarded by bows and arrows every time he left the White House. How was he to know that there was another Washington four days' journey away? Nothing could persuade him and my other friends that they could see the Indians they wanted to see only when the *Chief* steamed into Albuquerque station.

I was horrified at some of the changes New York had wrought in me. Two years before I would never have laughed because the invitation commanding me to attend the Thanksgiving Service for King George V's Jubilee carried the instructions "Trousers Will Be Worn." Two years before I would never have felt slightly indecent putting on evening dress at seven o'clock in the morning to attend the function.

I couldn't drink the English coffee which tasted rather like stewed asphalt. In New York I was used to green vegetables all the year round, and so I turned up my nose at the slab of boiled garden raffia they called spring greens. After a week I couldn't look a creamy, jammy "trifle"—which I thought was a great deal too much—in the face.

It must be something in the water that makes English beer and tea taste so good. It must be something in the water, too, that makes Adam's wine such a good drink in New York. It *is* something in the water. Namely ice. I had to give up drinking water in London.

While I had been wrestling with the servant problem in

New York, I had done some boasting about the good old English servant class, dependable, honest, capable, and thorough. Well, I even had to change my mind about that. W. P. Lipscomb, the scenario writer, asked us to break in a chef for him while he was in Hollywood. Dixie Tighe nearly broke in the chef's head. Every day she complained about the monotony of his meals. The chef was so confused by it all that when Mr. Lipscomb returned and held his first dinner the poor man prepared six different kinds of dessert. The only trouble was that in his confusion he served them all before the meat.

Just before we sailed, we hired a car and drove to Devon and Cornwall. Dixie Tighe fell in love with the countryside. "It looks as if it were scrubbed every morning before breakfast," she said. I didn't have time to look at it. I was too busy concentrating on driving on the left-hand side of the road.

Like an American tripper I fell in love with Polperro. We spent half a day in the smuggler's cottage. It had belonged to one of the wreckers—ruthless land pirates who enticed shipping onto the treacherous rocks and pillaged passengers and crew. One night the wrecker went off on a particularly dangerous mission. He handed a key to his wife. "That's the key to my treasure chest," he said. "If I don't come back, never let a soul take down that key. Whosoever does take it down shall be cursed forever." That was two hundred years ago. The key is still hanging there. "An example," I said to Dixie Tighe, "of the way an English wife obeys her husband."

Of course, everyone told me I had an American accent. It was true up to a point. I mean I did use the word *swell* rather too often, and called a fellow a *guy*, and pronounced all the

syllables of secretary instead of saying sec't'ry. But I had clung to my broad A, and had stubbornly refused to admit the existence of the word tomatoyto. I hadn't really an American accent in talking. But I was ready to concede as I left London that I had an American accent in thinking.

History, like garlic, repeats itself.

And so I went to America a second time in the *Majestic*.

Again there was mist in Southampton water, but this time I needed no anesthetic to numb my senses. The *matelots* were again loading gold into the liner's belly at Cherbourg, but this time I needed nothing to distract me. My trunks were full again with Jack Izod's shirts, but this time I did not care what Americans thought about my appearance. I would not say that I was glad to leave England. But I was rather relieved to be going home. And home, now, was New York.

Dixie Tighe was again confined to her cabin by a "perfectly tempestuous sea" which the captain unkindly described as a moderate swell, and so I had the greater part of the voyage to myself. No somber, morbid misgivings this time. But a gay time.

New York had no magic setting at the end of this voyage. It looked just as I had seen it a hundred times. A group of buildings, which, like the people occupying them, struggled to see which could climb the highest.

On my way to the Customs benches I passed a group looking open-mouthed at the liner, then the wonder of her time. I overheard one of them asking in a voice deadly serious: "Wonder if she has steam heat."

I was back in New York.

CHAPTER XIV

BY THE fall of 1936 it was obvious that Franklin D. Roosevelt was leading America—like a sort of political Moses—into a Land of Promise, but only by leading it at the same time into a Land of Promissory Notes.

He was spending money left and right. Mostly left, his enemies said. And I wrote so many stories about the alphabetical agencies that he used for the purpose that I no longer had to spell out "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog" for typewriting practice.

The general public didn't seem to care much that the National Debt was getting like the journey from here to a star. O Debt, where is thy sting? summed up their attitude. But the tycoon class, championed by spaniel-faced William Randolph Hearst, was squealing loudly that it was high time that the New Deal's Chief Croupier realized that no game had yet been invented in which the banker could pay out all the time. And now was the time for the bank to win for a while, so that the budget could be balanced. I didn't see how any president could balance that budget. It was a job more for a first-class juggler.

Well, Roosevelt was anxious to take up his option on a renewal of his lease of the White House. And the tycoons were just as anxious to throw him out the back door that he had

slammed in their faces after the last election. And there was every prospect that my first American election would be a lively one.

In England a potential prime minister is selected very much like prime beef. I mean they go over him pretty thoroughly and decide that he is the right grade, months before it is time for him to face the poll in the election abattoir. Of course, in normal times each party has had its leader since they were all in diapers, and so they don't have the problem of selecting a man who, if his party gets a majority, will become prime minister. But death does sometimes remove even English politicians. Then the party chieftains meet in a large quiet room upholstered in red leather, and if the tones of Big Ben awaken them every quarter of an hour they eventually decide upon the right man.

In America I found it all very different. For a former president to remain leader of his party seemed to be as difficult as for a needle to smoke a package of Camels. He was either dead, or so discredited that he dared never show his face again except in a waxworks exhibition at Coney Island. So that gave an excuse for the conventions, which looked to me as if they were organized by a partnership of Barnum and Bailey and Polly Adler.

Roosevelt was, apparently, here to stay. The Democratic Convention didn't pause to think whether or not it would renominate him. But a much better time was had by all at the Republican Convention. They were able to enjoy themselves for a week before everyone got together to vote for Governor Alfred Mossman Landon.

Landon, hope and glory of the Republicans, took the "plain

ordinary American" angle. To emphasize that, it was necessary for him to say to the nation, "Call me Alf." Anyway, he adopted the abbreviation officially for the campaign. I smiled at the prospect of English voters being asked to vote for our Nev.

Roosevelt always reminded me of champagne—even if it was, perhaps, a little like that stuff they served on Repeal Night. Landon reminded me of English suet pudding. There couldn't have been two men more opposite. From the pictures in the newspapers, I gathered that their only common interest was fishing. But even there Landon liked to fish from the side of an open boat, and Roosevelt preferred a United States Navy battleship.

Three months before polling, the campaign was well under way. Three months before polling in an English election they would have still been talking about the cricket scores. But in New York there was tremendous activity. It wasn't the same gentlemanly kind of activity that I had seen in Whitehall. It was vicious activity.

Whispering campaigns were set in motion. From broker's office to clubroom went the report that Roosevelt had gone mad. A nice, fat red (Communist shade) herring was drawn across his path at every step. There were stories about his wife, his children, even his mother.

It was reported "on unimpeachable authority" that Roosevelt planned to make himself a dictator, European style. It was reported that he planned the overthrow of the beloved Constitution. It was reported that he planned the destruction of capitalistic industry. So often did I hear Franklin D. Roosevelt cursed in New York that I thought his middle name was "Damn."

Even the people of Maine and Vermont, where a man who says "yep" and "nope" is a chatterbox, began saying "Nope. Nope. Nope."

When an English prime minister calls a general election there is a phrase in political jargon which says that he is going to the country. He doesn't go to the country at all. He leaves that to the rural candidates of his party. Occasionally he makes a couple of trips into the provinces to bolster a weak spot. He goes by train. He flies only when it is urgently necessary—as when Hitler wants to see him. When he goes by train, he travels in an ordinary first-class compartment on the ordinary five thirty-five from Euston.

Often the compartment isn't even reserved for him alone. For instance, there was the time that Lloyd George was traveling back from an election meeting in the company of his political opponent, Lord Derby. At a country station a ditchdigger, finding the train was full, walked into Lloyd George's compartment. Lord Derby was very gracious to the fellow and gave him a cigar. Two stations later Lord Derby left the train. Lloyd George asked the ditchdigger if he knew the identity of the man who had been so kind to him. "Naw," said the ditchdigger. Lloyd George told him that the man was Lord Derby. The ditchdigger was stunned. And then he said in a voice that betrayed his wonderment: "Blimey, fancy 'im talking to a coupla bums like us."

They don't say that an American president who is seeking election is going to the country. But he goes to the country—literally.

I mean Roosevelt took over a whole train, filled it with his family, his secretariat, and about forty newspapermen, and

set out—like a superior traveling salesman with himself as his sample case—across the whole country.

Roosevelt's train had been gone a week when I received a cable ordering me to join it. My editors could never get used to America's size. They didn't understand why I had to fly to Cheyenne, Wyoming.

After a flight over miles of terrain as bleak as a relief map of the Sudan, Cheyenne looked, even in the dusk, like an oasis. I noticed as soon as I landed an air of importance about the town. Rather like the air of a small, provincial English town, when a front page murder has been committed there. The cabdriver treated me like royalty when I asked him to drive me to the Roosevelt train. The train, as long as the Coronation Scot, was in a siding. Plain-clothed Secret Service men guarded it on each side. They almost frisked me before they allowed me aboard.

The President did not go to see the constituents. The constituents went to see him. I couldn't imagine that happening in England. A candidate who expected people to give up a day's livelihood and come fifty, a hundred, or two hundred miles by car to see him—even if he promised to make a speech standing on his head—would remain in splendid isolation. But these real-life Bill Harts and Tom Mixes in the cow country did that.

The fun of an English election is not provided by the candidates. It is provided by the constituents. It is worthwhile listening to half an hour's dull ranting to hear the heckling that nearly always follows it. Someone will say "What about Malta?" without being sure where Malta is, and then the fun begins. If it is a rough section, it ends, probably, in a

shower of bad apples and tomatoes. I suppose there is heckling in an American election. But Roosevelt wasn't heckled. He seemed to be as inviolate as the King.

There was an attempt in Cheyenne to demonstrate that there were some people in Wyoming who didn't think so much of him. A young heiress, who thought the New Deal was ruining the nation's financial structure, announced at a dinner party that she was going to convert all her inheritance into 100-carat diamonds. No one spoke to her for the rest of the evening.

At dawn we moved out of Cheyenne. For hours, it seemed, we passed through miles of country so desolate that a house looked like an exclamation mark. What was the use of campaigning in country like this, I wondered. Even if all the people voted, they would provide but a drop in the bucket. We climbed the foothills of the Rockies into Colorado, and then the train made frequent stops. Towns they called them, but they were really only ambitious villages. But Roosevelt put on his show with just as much fervor for each of them.

The President nearly always began with the same words. "Things seem much more prosperous here since I was here four years ago." The band—there was always a band of some sort—struck up "Happy Days Are Here Again." That soon became our theme song.

In no time I knew Roosevelt's speech by heart. He must have made it twenty times a day. But he never seemed to tire of it. He obviously loved making speeches. And the audiences never sought anything new. They obviously loved listening to speeches.

It was a strange little crowd that gathered around the rail-

way tracks at those wayside stops. The local banker, in formal black, would always be there. And beside him would stand a gnarled old farmer, uncomfortable in his dusty Sunday best, smiling first at the President, and then glowering at the banker. There were always lots of girls, pretty girls too, but they often had made up their apple cheeks so that they looked more like harlots, in order to imitate the city girls they thought their President was more used to seeing. Giggling sillily atop a bale of hay or a baggage truck, they acted more as if they had come to watch Clark Gable or Robert Taylor. And there would be older women, grimy cheeks cracked by the prairie sun, like earth thawing from a heavy frost, women just like those I had seen in a Cornish fishing village, women who refused to submit to the general excitement, but who wanted to listen and then go back to their kitchen stoves and think.

It was more like a circus coming into town when the Presidential Special stopped at the mountainside resort of Colorado Springs. There was a large brass band, cheering cowboys in the sort of costumes I thought cowboys ought to wear, and a sea of banners. It seemed that money from the New Deal's coffers had come to Colorado Springs. Money for relief projects. The banners thanked Mr. Roosevelt for contributions received. They thanked him most of all for a park. "Thanks, Roosevelt, for the Garden of the Gods," they proclaimed. I was just thinking what a pretty name, when I saw the banner the next group was carrying. "Thank you, Mr. President," it said, "for the Sewage Plant." Why does America think so often about sewage?

Then we entered enemy country, flat, dreary Kansas. It was a relief from an endless horizon of waving wheat to see

an occasional oil derrick. It must have been a relief for Kansas to see in Roosevelt someone who didn't look like Landon. One man out of six in every town at which we stopped could have easily got a job as stand-in for the man who thought he could beat Roosevelt.

We stopped at large cities after that. Cities of great wealth. Kansas City, for example. I am afraid I was more interested in standing in the station where, not many months before, some gunmen had fought a pitched battle with police than in listening to speeches that I could by then have delivered myself. And St. Louis, Missouri, with the old-time paddle steamers joining in the welcome with their whistles as they fought the (tide) of the great Mississippi River. And then Chicago.

I shall never forget that night in Chicago. The train was late arriving, because Mrs. Roosevelt had run out of knitting yarn, and she and her companion, a dancer named Mayris Chaney, had to go on a shopping expedition at St. Louis. As soon as the train stopped, it was obvious there was something in the air. The policemen in the station were so excited that they stopped James Aloysius Farley, campaign manager for the New Deal, from boarding the train. Secret Service men, who guarded Roosevelt as if he were more precious than bullion, were jittery. When the motorcade struck the streets, we found out why.

It was the maddest, noisiest, craziest mob I have ever seen. A million people, sane people and wild people, sober people and drunken people, respectable people and crooked people.

We were supposed to think, of course, that it was a spontaneous triumph for Roosevelt. It wasn't quite that. Chicago

knows a thing or two about ballyhoo and also a thing or two about force. Mayor Edward Kelly, Democratic boss of the city, had sent an ultimatum to his underlings. Said he: "There are fifty wards. Let there be 2,000 demonstrators from each ward. That will make at least a hundred thousand people in the streets." But the chieftains outdid themselves. Where he had ordered one man, ten men came.

Bands were playing. All kinds of bands. German bands, military bands, massed bands. All making a discordant jumble of "Happy Days Are Here Again." As if that were not bad enough, every saloon and restaurant turned its orchestra onto the pavement as we passed, and saxophone joined with trumpet, clarinet with trombone.

Wherever you looked there were people. People laughing, people crying, people dancing, people jumping, people scrambling for the cars. There were young men thanking Roosevelt for getting them jobs. Manicurists thanking him for getting them shorter hours. Waiters thanking him for getting rid of the gangs.

Barrels of beer were trundled out of cellars onto the pavements just to add to the confusion. Fireworks were let off in the streets. Telephone books were torn to pieces and thrown like confetti over the procession.

In the middle of it, I tried to recall something like it in England. Jubilee Night. That was it. For our King we could equal such a display of human emotion. But for a politician—never.

From Chicago we went right into the territory of the economic royalists. We went to Michigan, where the motorcars come from.

Henry Ford made news the day we crossed the state line. Henry Ford, the Lone Wolf, who made a fortune he cannot count from a flying bedstead. Henry Ford, who, singlehandedly, defied government and unions, because he paid his men more than either could demand. Henry Ford, who was reputed to have ordered a vast new workshop torn down because he didn't like the look of it. Henry Ford, who cunningly chose the day of Roosevelt's arrival in his stronghold to announce his complete support for Landon.

But Roosevelt had the last laugh. Michigan, the motorcar state, decided that we should be transported while in its territory by the home product, instead of by train. A fleet of cars were placed at our disposal, by courtesy of the Lincoln motor company. The Lincoln motor company was owned by Henry Ford.

Each of the cars was neatly labeled. Roosevelt's car was labeled "Presidential Party." The secretariat traveled in a car labeled "White House Car." The press cars were labeled "White House Correspondents." Immediately behind Roosevelt's car there followed a car containing his bodyguard. On a panel in the door was painted in letters a foot high "SECRET SERVICE."

As we returned to the station to take leave of motoring's capital, the procession was held up for nearly quarter of an hour. The block was caused by a breakdown, a breakdown of one of Detroit's motorcars.

At last the Presidential Special steamed through the prim fields of New York State again, bound for our last stop: Buffalo. We stayed in Buffalo all night. It was a relief to come back to earth. Constant adulation is boring. You get tired of

cheers, endless cheers. I longed for a good heckling in a rough constituency somewhere in the East End of London. I wanted to hear some boos. I wished I could have found a Landon meeting.

Most of the boys sought out some of Buffalo's better brothels. I got into a taxicab, drove over the border into Canada, and took a room in a hotel overlooking Niagara Falls.

But I did not see the Falls for twenty-eight hours. I was asleep.

CHAPTER XV

IT TOOK me nearly four years to become a fashionable New Yorker. I don't mean by that that I started any English equivalent of Café Society—a sort of Tea Society. I mean that I became ill.

I was sorry that I had remained so disgustingly healthy. It was so common of me. It meant that, when people asked me how I was, I had to reply in all truthfulness "Fine, thank you." Whereas, in order to have good standing, I should, apparently, have been able to launch into a long description of my operations. No wonder the medical business was such a profitable one—even before doctors found that they could write books as well as prescriptions.

Before I became ill, I acquired a sick dog. That, it seemed, was the next best thing to being ill yourself.

I used to have three dogs in England. They were the healthiest dogs I ever saw. And yet I never took them to the vets, never had them manicured, never gave them topcoats to wear in the winter. But in New York nearly all dogs are weaklings. That is because the vets call themselves dog hospitals instead of vets, and it is so smart to take your pooches for periodic examinations and treatments.

There is no more hardy animal than a Scottie, for instance. But in New York he must submit to a tartan raincoat—

complete with handkerchief to match in his breast pocket—before he may take a walk in the rain. And a wirehaired terrier must be done up in a home-knitted sweater before he faces a wind that his ancestors would have thought was a nice, spring zephyr.

Jubilee, a white Pekingese I had brought home from London, was always ill. Part of her illness was caused by the voyage, for she was really much too young to travel, and part by the medical care of the *Majestic's* surgeon, Dr. Woods, who, though an excellent doctor for human beings, knew next to nothing about dogs. When he saw her shivering in our cabin from an attack of nerves, he prescribed that she sleep in cotton wool. She did not sleep on the cotton wool. She ate it.

I had never owned a dog in New York before, and I did not know where to take Jubilee for treatment. Finally, I went through the telephone directory and selected the dog hospital with the largest advertisement.

It was just off Park Avenue. A quiet, dignified building in a street of small brownstone houses, most of them with the sign "Vacancy" in their ground floor windows. I rang a bell, and an elderly woman in a white coat opened the door. I was shown into a large, tiled room, as spotlessly clean as a newly scraped butcher's chopping block.

The woman who admitted me immediately doted upon Jubilee, as if suddenly there had been a miraculous answer to her prayer and she had become a mother. "You sweet, cunning little thing," she said, several times. Then she included me in her doting, and said: "Leave her with us. We will make her well, the sweet, cunning little thing."

I telephoned next day to find out how Jubilee was doing. The woman on the other end of the telephone must have been the one who had admitted Jubilee. In a voice now pitched to imitate the efficient tones of a professional nurse, she said: "The patient is in her room. She is doing as well as can be expected." My friends laughed, and told me it was a good story. But I convinced them by asking them to call to inquire after Jubilee. The "nurse" gave substantially the same report each time.

After a week I was told that the patient might come home. The same woman answered the door when I went to fetch her. "I will bring her down from her room," she said. Presently Jubilee came in, looking thinner, scruffier, and less healthy, if possible, than she had a week ago. The woman went to a large filing cabinet, and brought out Jubilee's case history. "Doctor says you must be careful with her diet," she said; and she gave me a schedule of meals more complicated than a baby's.

I always forget to ask the prices of things, and I had as usual overlooked inquiring beforehand about Jubilee's hospital fees. The woman, with another tender smile, handed me the bill. It was for forty-nine dollars. A bill like that was in the nature of a historical document, and I studied it carefully. Three dollars a day for treatment. Four dollars a day for room and board. Not so very long ago I was paying only a shilling or two more for a whole week's lodging.

When I had finally paid off the bills for Jubilee's illness, I prayed that, for the peace of mind of my bank manager, I myself would never fall ill in New York. I knew already



"Doctor says you must be careful with her diet."

about the high cost of living and I had heard all I wanted about the high cost of dying.

For instance, there was Dixie Tighe's story of her mastoid operation. A specialist was called in for consultation. He walked into the room, examined her ear, snapped "Nonoperable," and walked out again. A few weeks after she had emerged from the operation—of course, it was operable—his bill came in. One hundred dollars for one word. That was a better price than Arnold Bennett used to get.

The operation was performed in the middle of the boom, and Dixie was taken, in the emergency of the moment, to the best and most fashionable hospital in the city. Everything had been done to make it look as little like a hospital as possible, and powdered flunkies brought in the meals. Dixie was informed she was in a room that cost thirty dollars a day. She asked the nurse to tell her where the private bathroom was. The nurse was just able to see her over the turned-up end of her nose. "There are no private bathrooms," she said, "in our *cheaper* rooms."

Of course, that sort of thing is the New Yorker's fault. As I have said, his health is a fad with him. He will almost go to the hospital for a bad headache, and if he hasn't one when he gets there I'll warrant he will when he leaves. And as for the women, well, they will shut themselves up in a private room if they feel tired after choosing a new wallpaper or seeing another woman wearing a similar hat.

There is a certain type of New Yorker who is always performing some ritual that might have been ordained by a witch doctor. It may be a tablet that he ostentatiously swallows with half a glass of water during dinner. Or a mouthful of

vitamins squeezed into a little dirty-colored pill which he gulps as greedily as if it were a choice viand. Or something baked in ultraviolet rays or doused in halibut oil. He can name almost every organ in his body by its Latin name and would have you believe that he has had so many incisions that his stomach looks like the map of the Mississippi River.

But even more normal people take a great interest in their health. The advertisers know it. If they are trying to sell tea they stress the claim that tea gives you that extra vitality. They would have you chew gum because it helps your teeth. Oranges and lemons are promoted for their aid to health. But the apple people are wise enough not to say anything about the apple keeping the doctor away. They know that would take away half the fun of a New Yorker's life.

The medical profession has adapted itself comfortably to its patients' needs. The good old general practitioner seems to have disappeared. In his place has sprung up an abundant crop of specialists. If the patient is not sure what is wrong with him, he must first go to a diagnostician. The diagnostician, for a mere formality in the shape of a check for ten to twenty-five dollars, finds out the trouble, and sends him to an ear, nose, and throat man, an orthopedic man, a stomach man, and so forth. It hasn't quite reached the point where there is one doctor who works only on the right arm, and another who specializes on the left arm, but that is only a question of time.

If the trouble is more complex, the patient will possibly have to go to a pathologist as well, and then an X-ray specialist, who will send in a bill for anything from thirty to a hundred dollars.

Then comes the question of a cure. If the illness warrants hospital care, the patient can wave good-by to his new car, his larger apartment, and most of his savings. If he is permitted to stay in bed at home, he must be ready to pay the doctor ten dollars a visit, instead of the half-guinea demanded by the average London doctor.

If all else fails, the unfortunate patient will probably find himself in the hands of a psychiatrist. The patient at this point may as well give himself up for lost. The psychiatrist is likely to ask him if his mother liked raspberries, and then deduce that his illness is caused by too much travel on subway trains.

I do not like doctors at the best of times, and some of my comments may be prejudiced. But there is no exaggeration, I think, in saying that the medicine cabinet is as important a fixture in the average New York home as the larder. I don't know how druggists spare the time to sell sundaes, playing cards, quick luncheons, alarm clocks, coffee percolators, and *Gone With the Wind*.

When I became ill, I naturally tried to hide it. For a week I forced myself to walk about without betraying the almost paralyzing pain at the base of my spine. But Dixie Tighe found me out. She does not share my sentiments about doctors, and so I was hurried off to one. He was, I must admit, a charming fellow. There was no nonsense about him. He spoke my language. But his verdict was nonetheless alarming. He said that I must go to a hospital. I protested all the way home, but I was soon in a room on the fifth floor of a hospital just off Park Avenue, and I stayed there for six weeks.

I was the center of attention for the first twenty-four hours. Doctors came in to examine me. And then little men ar-

rived and stabbed me in the arm and the wrist and the finger, for samples of my blood. One of them seemed to resent that patients regarded him as a technician instead of as an artist, as a piano tuner, so to speak, instead of as a pianist. "Very important job, this," he said. "Easy to do wrong. Difficult to do right." When everything had been examined, they told me that I had acute rheumatic fever caused by appallingly toxic tonsils, that I would have to wait until the fever died down and then have my tonsils out, and that I could inform my office that I would be on the sick list for at least five months.

It was funny about the tonsils. I remember very vividly agreeing to have my tonsils taken out in London when I was about ten, in return for a promised cowboy suit. I had my tonsils out, and I got the cowboy suit. But, apparently, the tonsillectomy was as incomplete as the cowboy's suit.

When the pain had died down a bit, I became concerned with the financial side of my first experience of an American hospital. The room, small enough and painted a drab gray, cost nearly fifteen dollars a day. The blood test artist charged five dollars a sitting. The barber who came to shave me every morning cost seventy-five cents a day without tip. And I didn't dare think about the doctors' bills.

The hospital routine was different from anything I was used to. My London doctors had always insisted when I had a fever that I eat nothing. They believed in the old wives' tale, feed a cold and starve a fever. The meals they prescribed consisted of fruit juice, beaten eggs, and that abomination, bread and milk, which New York had improved a little by using toast instead of bread. But there were no such restrictions in

my hospital. I was brought twice a day a full meal with everything from soup to fruit.

In a few days I was firm friends with my nurses. The day nurse brought me all the floor gossip. The night nurse brought me chocolate fudge, which she made from the milk, butter, and sugar that the hospital left her in case a patient wanted something in the middle of the night.

The day nurse was always complaining because she had to prepare a new "nose case" for surgery. The early summer was the season for nose cases. They were mostly girls of the Jewish faith. They were willing to suffer the tortures of plastic surgery in order to lose the hook in their noses. They did not mind that the upper part of their faces was black and blue after the operation, or that they had to breathe through their open mouths for a week or so. They did not mind, because they could enter the hospital as Miss Rebecca Feldman, and leave it as Miss Patricia O'Brien.

I was told that a famous movie star had only just left the hospital after a series of operations to improve the appearance of her bosom, and that the wife of a former President of the United States had registered under a false name so that the public would not know that she had her face lifted.

I found out that Winston Churchill had been brought to my room when he was knocked down by a taxicab during a visit to New York. They moved him to an upper floor after the first day. The G-men ordered it. They had discovered that there was a flat roof right outside his window, and that it would have been easy for someone to climb there and shoot Mr. Churchill. I laughed at that. Who—in America, at any rate—would want to shoot Mr. Churchill?

There was one member of the staff I always welcomed. He was an orderly, the official to whom were delegated the duties it would not be quite nice for a female nurse to perform. He used to be a male nurse in one of the State asylums. One of his patients was Robert Irwin, the Mad Sculptor.

Irwin, who would have been a brilliant artist had not his parents bequeathed him a warped brain, had committed the crime of that year. In the early morning before Easter Sunday, he returned to a former lodging of his and killed the landlady. Then he kept vigil for the landlady's daughter, a beautiful photographer's model, named Veronica Gedeon. He sat in the bathroom sculpturing little men out of the pieces of soap, until the girl, sister of a married woman for whom he had conceived an insane passion, came home. Then he strangled her. In a moment of sanity he remembered the boarder who had taken his old room. Frank Byrnes, a harmless itinerant English barman, might have seen him come in, thought Irwin. So he pulled a sculptor's chisel from his pocket, and stabbed Byrnes, sleeping innocently, twenty times. The crime would not have been a sensation, perhaps, had it not been that there were more than a hundred professional photographic poses of the murdered girl. Poses in pretty dresses, and poses seminude. The tabloids produced new ones with every edition.

"He was a nice quiet fellow, was Irwin," said my orderly. "I kind of liked him. We used to play checkers by the hour. He knew he was crazy. He used to beg me to promise that they would never let him out. 'I'll commit murder some day,' he said. I promised him they wouldn't

let him out. But they did. It's funny, but in some ways that guy had a beautiful mind."

My orderly told me scores of fascinating stories from the insane wards, but the one that interested me most concerned their passion for money. They all want to make bank notes. To appease them the authorities usually give them paper and crayons.

"They spend hours at it," explained my orderly. "Usually they put their own faces on them. And then they form an asylum bank. The strange part is that they never make five dollar bills or ten dollar bills. Always seven-and-a-half dollar bills, or thirteen dollar bills."

Well, the time came for my operation. When I had sufficiently recovered from the ether, I found that I had a special nurse who was studying Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* and was practicing on me.

In the course of time my rheumatic fever left me, and I was able to walk along the corridors of the hospital. On the first day I had a fright. I walked out of my door and almost collided with a being who looked exactly like the invisible man. Where his head should have been there was nothing but bandage. There was a small gap around his eyes, there were no eyebrows and no eyelashes, and the skin around them was black.

I stumbled and went back to my room. I rang for the nurse and asked her what it was I had seen. She was amused at first at my fright, but when she explained her smile turned into a look of concern. "One of the poor fellows who was burned in the *Hindenburg*," she said.

In my hospital there were twenty survivors of the explosion which destroyed the great German Zeppelin as it was landing at Lakehurst, New Jersey. Most of them looked like the man I had seen in the corridor. But one was in bed. He is still in that same bed, I expect. He was a man of sixty-three, a passenger. He kept his wits about him, and when he saw the first flames he jumped overboard. He was not even bruised. He got to his feet and began running for the safety zones. He hadn't run half a dozen steps when a body, falling from the Zeppelin, landed on top of him. When they got him to the hospital, they found that he had a broken back.

At last I was discharged from the hospital. I decided I could never afford to get sick in New York again. But I have been sick again. You cannot help it in New York.

In England we, like our dogs, are Spartans. We men may wear long underwear—to the eternal amusement of New Yorkers—but we bathe in a cold bathroom, we sleep in a cold bedroom, and we live in a sitting room as nicely chilled as our manner toward a stranger. We may be uncomfortable, but it is a rule of science that nothing spoils when it is kept chilled.

Not so the New Yorker. He is a fragile hothouse plant. When he takes a bath he practically takes a Turkish bath. He sleeps in a temperature good only for fine claret. And he lives, works, and plays in steam-heated bliss in rooms where the windows are just places to hang Venetian blinds.

CHAPTER XVI

THERE IS an Englishman living in the middle of the Sudan.

On his every side there is nothing but sand, five hundred miles of sand to the north, the south, the east, and the west. Yet there blooms around his shack, where the Cape-to-Cairo planes stop for a rest and some fuel, a garden as profuse as any in Surrey. To make that garden was a job of which Hercules would have been proud. Every bushel of soil had to be brought a thousand miles by caravan. To the Englishman it was worth it because where there is an Englishman there must also be a garden.

I guess that was why I bought—I mean, will have bought—Matthew's Farm.

I have described my brave efforts with the six geranium pots on my apartment terrace. Well, I became more ambitious, and bought a cherry tree. It lost all its leaves in a high wind. My ageratum turned an unhealthy brown during the first heat wave. In any case it was only slight satisfaction for my yearning to turn over the rich, black earth and wear boots plastered with fertile mud, to prick the dried-up sand in the flower boxes with a trowel large enough to stir an after-dinner cup of coffee.

So I decided to move to the country. Of course, it was not only the garden business, although I try to pretend it was. But

rents in New York soared as soon as prosperity peeped its shy little head around the corner, and I seemed to be giving most of my salary to landlords just to keep a roof—or rather an extremely noisy neighbor—over my head.

Furthermore, an Englishman, accustomed to the quiet of London, made even quieter so often by the soundproofing of a fog, cannot be expected to live amid crashing elevated trains, screaming fire engines (even if they do promise, as a concession to Mayor LaGuardia, to scream only when going *to* a fire), and the noisiest seven million people in Christendom, without needing a nerve tonic.

My first notion was to build. My second was how to pay for it.

Building costs money in America, even if the houses are made of wood and plaster instead of bricks and mortar. I could not get a house that was anything like what I wanted under about \$15,000.

Needless to say I did not have \$15,000. But the ever-obliging Mr. Roosevelt would take care of that. My bank would lend me the money, and one of those alphabetical organizations of his would guarantee me in case I died, went broke, or skipped the country. I would pay it back with interest every month, and that meant that I would own the house outright just about in time to be buried on the property, always providing that the water company would give permission, which they wouldn't.

But I had to own the land outright before I could apply for a loan. So I went land hunting. I had an idea that America with 1,937,144,960 acres, most of it obtained from the Indians

for a few beads and some firewater, would be pretty generous about its land. But no.

I went first to swank Long Island. One journey to Long Island in a train that seemed to have a sentimental regret it was no longer a stage coach, decided me that I wouldn't want it if they gave it to me. Then I went to Connecticut.

I found just the plot I was looking for. It was two and a half acres, secluded, surrounded by trees. I nearly put down a deposit. But my better judgment told me to say that I would think it over a couple of days.

Friends in New York are funny people. As soon as they find out you are planning to do something they have done, they do their best to discourage you. One friend told me that it was impossible to get a carpenter to build a roof that would not leak. I told him that I thought that sort of thing happened only in England, and not in an efficient country like America. To convince me he continued his tale of discouragement. The plumber had put the pipes in upside down. The well-digger had connected the water inlet with the oil tank. The heating system refused to work except on a blazing August day. The plaster fell off the living-room ceiling. The electricians had walked off the job, because they found the man who had installed the telephone didn't belong to a union. And the whole job had cost him nearly \$2,500 more than he expected.

I divided what he said in half, and still came to the conclusion that I wouldn't build.

Then I investigated prefabricated houses. You order them, like dog kennels, from a catalogue. On Saturday you say

"I'll have that one." It is delivered on Tuesday. You can move in on Friday.

A sample house was erected on one floor of a New York skyscraper. It was charming. Like a rambling English cottage. It had a large living room, a good-sized dining room, a kitchen that made me want to stay there making omelettes and steak and kidney pudding, a maid's room and bath, and three bedrooms and three baths. Four bathrooms. That was fine. In America it seemed a dog catcher wouldn't come to tea if you had only one bath in your house. Again I went to my friends and again they discouraged me. So then I went looking for secondhand houses.

There were so many houses for sale that I thought the Depression had returned. But I found that that was not the reason. It was just that Americans are restless people. A hang-over from the covered wagon days. They could never understand that an Englishman would rent an apartment for ten years. They would hardly ever sign more than a year's lease. And they seemed to want to leave a house just as soon as there was nothing else left to be done to it. No wonder trailers were so popular in America.

And then I saw Matthew's Farm. It had been called Matthew's Farm as long as anyone could remember. People wanted me to call it something cute. Bedside Manor, or something like that. Jimmy Walker suggested a name he had wanted to use himself—Manorhattan. It is still called Matthew's Farm.

I don't know who Matthew was, and it certainly isn't a farm. If anyone ever did farm it he must have sown seeds that thrived on stony ground. There is enough rock to build

another Sing Sing. To make a garden you need no rake, shovel, or fork, but a pneumatic drill, a steam roller, and a load or two of dynamite.

Matthew's Farm consists of 5.7 acres on the outskirts of Pound Ridge, a village with the distinction of being the smallest in New York State.

Laura Brown, the estate agent, stressed the house's age. It was built, she said, before the Revolutionary War, and she hinted that it might have given sanctuary to a redcoat or two during the battle at Bedford Village near by. It was a landmark. It was, in fact, 150 years old.

I told her that I wasn't really looking for a modern house. She laughed uncertainly, wondering what kind of lunatic I was.

"But it's 150 years old," she said, as if she were trying to sell me William the Conqueror's week-end cottage. "I was just joking," I explained at last, "but you see, the last time I was in England I stayed in a house that was built in 1492, and I myself used to own a workman's cottage which was 350 years old, and it rented for fifty cents a week."

The ground was mostly waste land. Two acres of marshland. Two acres of sloping hillock. One acre of arable land. And .7 acres of woodland. There was an enormous maple tree—three hundred years old—in front of the house, and exactly three feet of the garden that had started me on my rural odyssey.

But I wanted the place, and, more important, Dixie Tighe wanted it. I asked the price. "Well, she's asking fifteen thousand dollars," said Mrs. Brown. But that did not mean a thing. You always ask more than you can get, so that the

buyer may think he is getting such a bargain when you come down a thousand or two. I made an offer, and it was accepted.

Americans love references. I had rented apartments in New York, and been through the nerve-racking ordeal of providing three social references, two business references, a bank reference, and a promise not to throw cigarette ends out of the window. Sometimes they even made me sign my name to a long-distance railway ticket. As the greater part of the purchase price for Matthew's Farm was covered by a mortgage, I, therefore, hunted out my passport, my birth certificate, my matriculation papers, my bank balance (there happened to be one that month), and the most imposing list of references I could find. But I didn't have to show one of them. I made a down payment. I gave a check for a refrigerator, and another for a gas stove. I signed the mortgage and the deed. And Matthew's Farm was mine.

When you buy a house in America, you ought to lock yourself in a moated castle and live for a month like a hermit.

I had always avoided the much-advertised, high-pressure salesmanship of America. A few insurance solicitors and a peddler of ice cream and candy were the only salesmen who had ever penetrated the fastness of my office. But I had not held title to Matthew's Farm more than twenty-four hours when every salesman in America was sent out to practice on me.

The trouble was that it was apparently news in New York for a newspaperman to have enough money to buy a house—even on the installment plan. Anyway the *Herald Tribune*

told to its fascinated readers the details of my real estate deal under the headline: "C. V. R. Thompson, Newspaperman, Buys Historic Property in Westchester." The catch was that they said in the story that I would "improve" the property.

That was the signal for the salesman. I had almost to give up my work to answer the telephone.

A Mr. Smith telephoned. Naturally, you would never think that Mr. Smith, of Smith, Smudge, & Smith, would ever think of announcing himself on the telephone merely as Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith turned out to be the representative of a firm of tree surgeons. Before I could ask him what a tree surgeon was, Mr. Smith was in the middle of a long story about the proper care of trees. American trees, like American dogs, must, it seemed be coddled and nursed. I laughed. I told Mr. Smith that where I came from we left trees alone, and they grew to a splendor that made them famous all over the world. It was Mr. Smith's turn to laugh. A pitying laugh. Everyone knows that trees must be cared for, he said, and that their nerves just get shot to blazes by builders and plumbers, and all those nasty, cruel people who dig about their roots during the almost criminal business of putting up a house. When any construction work was finished, concluded Mr. Smith, the trees must be given a chance to recuperate by having a shot or two of a sort of sylvan Ovaltine which costs only twenty dollars a shot.

I told Mr. Smith that nothing would make me insult a good, hardy, self-respecting maple in such a manner. Mr. Smith told me I would regret my parsimony when I approached him a year later regarding transplanting a hundred-year-old-tree—at a cost of five hundred dollars or more—to

take the place of the tree with the jagged nerves, which, by then, would be most certainly dead. But when he found that I could not be moved, he changed his line of attack.

He supposed I knew that bugs were nearly as dangerous as plumbers to my trees. If I did not have my trees sprayed I would have no fruit, of course, but in time I would not even have any trees. For a purely nominal sum his men would come and spray my trees, and I wouldn't see a caterpillar all summer. In desperation I agreed. The bill came in a few weeks later. It was for the purely nominal sum of sixty dollars.

Then the express companies, or moving companies as I still preferred to call them, launched their attack. They were not too sure of their ground at first. They had a fleeting suspicion that perhaps the *London Daily Express* was itself a moving company. (I still get calls asking me how much I would charge to move a trunk to Wilkes-Barre.) But as soon as they confirmed that they had a victim at their mercy, they carried on interminably about their plush-lined vans, their courteous employees, and their bargain rates.

The mail brought in a bale of literature from the oriental carpet manufacturers. Interior decorators offered me their advice so that I would not make the mistakes that everyone makes. Someone had a fire-resistant roof which I ought to install immediately. I was offered special prices on rose trees and manure, demurely called shrubbery ration. Every kind of insurance tout called, telephoned, or wrote. They showed how easy it would be to insure my servants, my furniture, my house, and how I could protect myself from legally minded guests who might sue for dog bites, psittacosis, monkey bite, or a false step on a wet rock. I wanted to tell them that I

didn't have friends like that, but I was afraid they would have an answer and that would prolong the conversation. Something like "You don't know your best friend until your dog has bitten him."

Finally I announced that I was permanently "out" to people who telephoned, threw my mail in the wastepaper basket, avoided all callers, and turned to the practical arrangements I had to make before moving in.

I was surprised that it was so easy to arrange about electricity. When I lived just out of London I had to use oil lamps, and a friend from England told me he had to abandon plans to buy a house because it needed a special act of parliament for him to take current from a main, which, though only a hundred yards down the road, happened to be in the next county.

I was twelve miles from a city, but I could to my amazement get gas. My neighbor, Westbrook Pegler, who finds country life embittering enough to inspire him to castigate someone or somebody every day in 150 newspapers, advised me to use gas. It wasn't that he preferred gas, but he pointed out that the company's trucks were fitted with snowplows, and it was sometimes convenient in winter to find something urgently wrong with the installation.

My next problem was heat. Five years before, I would have bought a ton of coal and a couple of oil heaters and been content. But steam heat had weakened my English hardiness. I had to have real heat now.

Plumbers took over the house. Radiators appeared in every room. A furnace heated by an oil burner was erected in the cellar. While he was working in the cellar, the fitter discov-

ered a case of very fine sherry that my friend, Harry Bradbury Pratt, had named after me. The pipes went in upside down. When the moment came to try out the system, the banging in the pipes shook the house to its timbers. But someone put it right, and soon my nice, fresh house in the country was as stiflingly hot as any apartment in New York.

The day after we moved in, the first mail arrived in the little tin box just outside the front gate. With the excitement that accompanied anything new at that time, I went down to fetch it. There was one letter. It was addressed to me at R.F.D. No. 1. That made me feel as if I were a convict. I opened it. It was another salesman's letter. It asked if I would not be interested in buying some property in the delightful village of Pound Ridge, New York.

We decided we had to have a couple. It wasn't that I wanted a butler. I had already discovered that was no distinction in a country where every man who can peel potatoes, and wear a white coat, calls himself a butler. But we needed a man to drive the car.

Dixie Tighe had been coerced into abandoning her attempts to learn, because of an unfailing habit of stepping on the accelerator instead of the brake in any emergency. I had driven a car since I was fourteen, but I had not the courage to apply for the test that was necessary before I could obtain a license. Finally I overcame that, when I discovered that the authorities generously waived the test for holders of a British driving license. I went to an enormous amount of trouble to renew my expired British license, and received my American license after reading off the letters of the alphabet at a distance of



"Plumbers took over the house."

twenty feet with a copy of the *Daily News* held over my left eye by the examiner.

Even then I was scared to take to the road. An American looks upon the laws of the road in the same way a servant looks upon an antique Dresden coffee set: as something to be broken. Even after all this time in the United States I was still too polite to be a motorist. Why, when I put my hand out, I actually expected that someone would take some notice of it. I had to do two things about driving in America. I had to forget everything the courtesy cops in England had taught me. And I had to find someone else to do the driving.

So we went hunting for a couple. In spite of past experience I was still stubborn enough to want white servants. "All right," said Dixie Tighe, in her haughtiest tone. "If you want white servants you can engage them."

I clipped an advertisement from the *New York Times*. An English couple wanted work. They were refined, honest, and willing to work in the country for a reasonable wage. The man who answered the telephone did not sound a little bit like Arthur Treacher. "What are you offering?" he asked, gruffly. I mentioned a sum that fitted the phrase "reasonable wage." "Huh!" he grunted. "Wouldn't work for a penny under 140 a month." One hundred and forty dollars a month. Seven pounds a week. Not so long ago I was writing a dozen masterpieces a week for less than that.

With visions of goulash for breakfast and wiener schnitzel for afternoon tea, I tried a Viennese couple. "I vish people wouldn't bother us if they cannot offer goot money," said the voice at the other end of the telephone.

I telephoned a Finnish couple, but their landlady would not call them to the phone when I answered her question about the wages I wanted to pay.

"I guess we had better try colored help," I said, humbly.

We interviewed a series of colored couples. Fat ones and thin ones, old ones and young ones, good ones and bad ones. They all wanted at least \$125 a month, a guarantee that they would do no washing, a promise that their fares to Harlem would be paid on days off. It isn't that there is a servant shortage in America; it is trying to find servants who are willing to work for a little less than you make.

Finally we picked Ruby and Sigmond. They cost more than we could afford, but we were impressed with Ruby's boast that she could save half her salary by her wise marketing. I would hate to see her idea of foolhardy marketing. I suppose she would have given the dogs humming birds in aspic.

But they worked hard. Sigmond took care of the garden, that is to say, he expanded it from three feet to six feet. And his efforts would have been more successful had he planted the shorter flowers in front of, instead of behind the cosmos. Ruby kept the house as clean as a nurse's apron. They would have been with us still had they not been so stubborn.

Dixie Tighe had her own ideas about how a table should be set. Ruby would not concur. Other people she had worked for, she would say, never did it that way. And I don't think she ever got over our confession that we had no finger bowls. One evening we were expecting six dinner guests. Dixie Tighe and Ruby had their usual discussion about the table. "I want it done my way without all this conversation about it," said Dixie Tighe. Whereupon Ruby drew herself to her full height

and screamed: "Lincoln freed the slaves. Lincoln freed the slaves. And I guess we better quit." They quit.

An emergency in the household made it necessary for us to find another servant immediately. An employment agency in Stamford was asked to send anyone who was available at once. They sent Henry.

Henry was a Japanese. He had entered the United States by way of California. One of his last jobs in California had been with Dick Powell and Joan Blondell. His opening remark was: "Miss Blondell, she say to me, Henry, why are all good things to eat so fattening?" We checked his references. They were bad. He was unreliable, he drank, and he was an expensive cook. Said Dixie Tighe: "Well, the others had excellent references and said they cooked like Oscar of the Waldorf, and they were terrible. So let's try it in reverse, and see how it works out." So we hired Henry.

There was some raw chicken in the ice-box, and a few tomatoes, a little lettuce, and some odds and ends. We asked Henry to fix dinner. From those humble beginnings he made a dinner which would have made Oscar puff his chest out. A salad looking like a rose garden was put on the table. The chicken might have been raised on *pâté de foie gras*. The homemade éclairs tasted like chocolate-coated ambrosia. "I just fix it," said Henry, modestly.

Henry was such a brilliant cook that our neighbors predicted that he was bound to find a better job, that he must surely be a drunkard, and that the grocery bills would be colossal, and then angled for another dinner invitation. But the grocery bills were lower than they had ever been. Henry bought a potato in this store, a cauliflower in that store, and

went to six stores before he bought a duck. I had to retreat in confusion from one store when he picked up a chicken, labeled "fresh-killed," smelled it, and then threw it back on the counter, laughing. To the butcher he said: "Fresh-killed! Joke."

One day I found the laundry list. There was an item that puzzled me. It consisted of a numeral and a crude drawing of what looked like a pair of spectacles. I asked him what the drawing represented. He blushed. "Laundryman, he know," he said. I questioned him again. At last he admitted, with another blush, that he meant brassières.

Henry borrowed the car for one of his days off. He wanted to go fishing, he said. Next evening he set before us two plates of delicious clam chowder. We complimented him. He grinned. "Most expensive clams ever," he said. "Twenty dollars a plate." I asked him why on earth he paid so much money for a dozen or two humble clams. "Not for clams, but for accident to car."

That accident, which occurred after he had been drinking too much, started him drinking in earnest. One night we brought a guest home, and found that Henry had passed out. He had fallen asleep with a lighted cigarette in his hand, and his bed was burned. I warned him that he would burn the house down. "Henry wake up when too hot," he said. He kept on drinking. California sherry at eighty-nine cents a gallon. One night Westbrook Pegler dropped by when we were out and asked Henry when he was going to make chop suey for him again. "Tomorrow night," he said, "and that last meal." Pegler told us. I asked Henry if he intended leaving. He told me he wanted to go. He was honest, I believe, and felt a bad

drunk coming on. We parted the best of friends. When we shook hands at the station we were all three on the verge of tears.

A Filipino followed Henry. Anyone would seem a dullard after Henry, any cook a hash-slinger. But our Filipino was sober, reliable, and the best driver I had ever seen off a race track.

After fifteen years, the English language still puzzled him. One day I telephoned to find out if it was still snowing. "Oh no," he said, "he is still asleep." I never did find out what he meant.

I asked him once if he could make Yorkshire Pudding. I ask everyone that. "Oh, yes," he said. He made it, and it was very good. But he served it for dessert.

I saw him emotional only once. That was when he returned from the village store after buying some pineapples. "The girl tell *me* proper way to choose pineapples," he raged, "and me born in pineapple."

Another Japanese took his place eventually, a Japanese with the unoriental name of Thomas. He was a trained butler and had held one job for seven years. He was tired of the place and wanted a change. His employer would not let him go, so he poured the contents of the coffee percolator over the housemaid while she was in the middle of serving dinner. He was fired. Came the sinking by Japanese bombers of the American gunboat *Panay* in the Yangtze River. There was a wave of animosity throughout America against the Japanese. Japanese servants were dismissed in hundreds. Thomas for the first time in his life found it hard to get a job.

He came to us to work as a gardener. He had never been a gardener, but he was sure he could do the work. He did. He transformed the rocky barrenness of Matthew's Farm in one summer. The first week he nearly burned the whole establishment with a brush fire. With brooms and twigs he tried to beat out the flames. Then he prayed, promising God to give up cigarettes if He stopped the fire. The fire stopped, and Thomas, who used to smoke forty cigarettes a day, has never smoked again.

In view of this demonstration of his religious fervor, I asked him, when I remembered some weeks later, if he wanted to go to church on Sunday mornings. "No, thank you," he said. "Why should I go to church? Mrs. Thompson and you are my gods."

We are expecting to keep Thomas, who has now become an expert cook, cabinet maker, painter, and electrician, until something happens. Something will happen, no doubt. It nearly always does with Japanese servants. Like the Japanese servant of a friend of mine. He took a sudden dislike to one of her woman guests. One week end he rapped on her door at seven in the morning. At the top of his voice he yelled: "Seven o'clock. Nice ladies don't lie in bed after seven o'clock."

P. S. Something has happened. Thomas has left.

If an American wants to obey the precept and love his neighbor, he has to cover a lot of ground. I mean anyone living within a twelve miles radius seems to be regarded as a neighbor. In a country as small as England, where a two-hundred mile journey is such an undertaking that Magellan should be your chauffeur, a jaunt of twelve miles to a friend's

house is still something to be planned days in advance. But in America, where a thousand miles is just an afternoon's plane trip, it is little more than walking down the road to mail a letter.

I was fortunate in my neighbors at Matthew's Farm.

Almost next door lived Westbrook Pegler, the columnist. I was scared to meet Pegler. His writings were so venomous that I thought he must use cobra's skin for a typewriter ribbon. Even his gentle, placid lake was called Lake Malice. But at home in his chalet down the road he was as mellow as old brandy. He made a bitter remark only twice during the evening. Once was when the American Newspaper Guild, an organization that was trying to make reporters fight for their rights by the same means as lumberjacks, was brought into the conversation. And the other time was when the name of his plumber was mentioned. When I next met the feared, embittered Pegler he was letting off fireworks to amuse his unamused nephew.

George T. Bye, the literary agent, lived down the road. He was literary agent for the President and for Mrs. Roosevelt. It is indeed a modern age in which Presidents and Prime Ministers need literary agents. I suppose the day is not far off when the Secretary of State will be doing a comic strip for Hearst.

It was Mr. Bye who told me about another interesting neighbor. He was a native, last in a long line of gardeners. His name was Lester C. Barker. Mr. Barker had the itch to write. He applied to the *New Canaan Advertiser* for the post of Pound Ridge correspondent and was accepted. In the flamboyant style of another era he wrote of the affairs of moment in

Pound Ridge. His articles were never edited or altered. That was why they always appeared under the byline "By Mr. Lester C. Barker."

In the course of time love came to Mr. Barker. In the way that men have, he wanted his sweetheart to share his fame. From then on, the articles appeared under the byline "By Mr. Lester C. Barker and Bubbles."

Columnist Heywood Broun, bulky and ill-kempt, so that an enemy once described him as a one-man slum, lived a mile or so away. He invited me once to a picnic for Mrs. Roosevelt. My cynical friends told me that if I wanted to be sure to meet her I should stay in the kitchen. The President's wife was always dropping in, they said, at newspapermen's kitchens. I said that, once and for all, I simply did not believe that legend about Mrs. Roosevelt.

Mrs. Roosevelt had not arrived. There was a hurried conference to decide whether or not Mrs. Roosevelt disapproved of liquor. Someone remembered that they never served hard liquor at the White House, and so the whisky bottles were hurriedly removed from the living room, and set up in the kitchen for those who simply had to drink. Most of us stayed in the kitchen. Quentin Reynolds and I were sipping our highballs and wondering why the colored maid, blushing with too much make-up, had troubled to put an apron over her shorts, when a high-pitched voice behind us asked: "I wonder if I could have a glass of water?" It was, of course, Mrs. Roosevelt. She had found the kitchen.

Gene Tunney's mansion was only eight miles away, and so he qualified as a neighbor. For those with a short memory I hasten to add that Mr. Tunney used to be a prizefighter.

You would hardly know it now. He is a scholar, a banker, a distiller, a figure in local politics, and the complete country gentleman. He no longer runs in shorts and sweater to the top of the hill, and, filling his lungs with air, exclaims with a slap of his chest: "My, but this country air is enervating." He has the finest wine cellar in the county now, and knows how to use long words properly. But to me he is still most fascinating when, after decreasing the stock of his cellar a little, he mellowly recalls the old days of the ring.

Mr. Tunney was one of the few prizefighters with a mind for anything but blondes and money, and he still remembers what he used to do and think about in the last hours before a big fight. "I always used to relax for a while by reading," he once told me. I believe he read *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* before a bout he was certain he would win, but he chose *The Last Days of Pompeii* before an all-important championship. "Just before the fight I always used to drink a pint of champagne," he said. That pint of champagne became a shibboleth with him. He came to think that he could not win without it. And then Prohibition was proclaimed. That was a blow harder than any boxer had ever given him. He thought his career, his ambitions were ended. He did not realize how soon he would be able to buy all the champagne he wanted.

One of my most entertaining neighbors was Deems Taylor, the composer. Not only was he the foremost American composer. He was an expert cabinet maker, a brilliant photographer, a successful gardener, an amusing speaker, and a pleasing writer.

His piano tuner told me he was the worst pianist he had

ever known, and warned me that if I wanted my instrument to survive I must stop Mr. Taylor playing it. Be that as it may, I can testify to all his other achievements. Most American gardens would not get honorable mention in a horticultural competition in the Sahara, but Mr. Taylor's garden was one that would have inspired a poet. Annoyed that the women in the household were always moving his bed around, he built himself a bed into the bedroom wall, and it was one of the best-looking beds I ever saw. People who come to my house usually refuse to believe that Mr. Taylor's photograph of a poplar-lined highway in Brittany is not the etching of a master.

I spent many a pleasant evening with Mr. Taylor. I had not become so American that I did not sometimes feel homesick. Most people made a wisecrack when I spoke with some rapture of a sunset in Devon, of the greenness of a meadow, of bluebells, and daffodils, and horse chestnut trees. But Mr. Taylor enjoyed talking about England. He could talk in pounds, shillings, and pence with as much facility as in dollars and cents. He knew exactly what I was talking about when I mentioned a small London street, or a pub, or a Belisha beacon. He understood England more thoroughly than any American I had met. It was not for several months that I discovered Mr. Taylor had never been to England.

Even the letter carrier at Pound Ridge was interesting. His name was George Stevens, and he had been delivering the mail since the horse and buggy era. In the early days he was more of an institution than in this modern age. He would think nothing of obliging a housewife who had left a note asking him to baste the roast in the oven or the matron who

had gone to town and left him the task of giving the baby its noontime bottle. But now he drove around in a motorcar instead of a buggy, and people had servants and nurses to baste their roasts and feed their babies.

George Stevens was always a thrifty man, and he had a savings account. The neighboring town of New Canaan, now one of the most prosperous townships in America, was little more than a market town when an astute salesman suggested that George Stevens invest some of his savings in real estate. Stevens succumbed and became the sole owner of a piece of waste land in the wrong part of town.

Years went by, and Mr. Stevens went on living in the cottage that he could never heat, and cursing every time he had to open the garage doors. And his wife added to the nest egg for their old age by taking in boarders.

And then one day the United States Post Office decided they must build a new post office in New Canaan. The only piece of land they liked was the strip of wasteland that belonged to their employee, George Stevens. They paid him a small fortune for it.

So Mr. Stevens moved out of the cottage that he could never heat, and he bought one of the most elegant estates in New Canaan. Money was plentiful now, and so Mr. Stevens, determined at last to have enough heat, put in two oil burners instead of one. And he installed an electrical system which opened his garage doors as soon as he pressed his button. And his wife gave up her boarders.

George Stevens, in the autumn of life now, is happy. But Mrs. Stevens is rather sad. She does so miss the company of her boarders.

CHAPTER XVII

I WAS GLAD that I had chosen that particular sailing of the *Queen Mary*.

On September 21, 1938, the Great Hurricane struck New York. It was raining so hard that the drops, bouncing back from the streets, formed a fog which was almost opaque. The wind, angry that the great buildings swayed only a millimeter or two in deference to it, screamed along the streets. It was good to be leaving New York on such a day.

The liner's sailing was delayed until dawn as soon as I had said good-by to my friends, but I still was glad to be away from that rain and wind. I congratulated myself upon choosing so adroitly the date of my departure for a holiday in England.

We had sailed out of the hurricane when I awoke from a fourteen-hour sleep. The sun was shining. It was warm. I inhaled the air, so fresh after the fumes of New York, and was filled with energy. Cheerful and exuberant I walked round the decks. My mood was not infectious. Everyone looked gloomy and worried. I could not understand them. It was such a nice day.

I changed for dinner and went for a cocktail in the forward bar. There was only one other passenger there. John Cobb, the racing motorist. He stared gloomily at the rim of his cock-

tail glass. Then he looked up, and said to me: "Looks bad, doesn't it?" I hesitated for a moment, and then answered: "Yes, it blew half of Long Island down. I've been waiting for a radiogram about my house, but I think the force of the hurricane missed our part of the country." John Cobb gave me a look of irritable surprise. "No," he said, "I don't mean the hurricane. I mean the war."

The war! He meant the Czechoslovakia business, of course. I had thought that was all over. When I had left New York, Mr. Chamberlain was in conference with Herr Hitler at Godesberg. The meeting was apparently proceeding so straightforwardly along expected lines, that the war-conscious American newspapers were giving more attention to the actual hurricane over America than to the threatened storm over Europe. But something had happened. I hate the radio as a source of news, and I had been asleep when the ship's daily bulletin was delivered. But others had not ignored them. That was why John Cobb was staring at the rim of his glass. That was why the ship's passengers were so gloomy.

The passengers became steadily gloomier. They pretended to enjoy dancing the "Lambeth Walk," but they had a forced gaiety. They went to the afternoon movies, but hurried out at half-time to be sure they were in time for the evening radio bulletin. Meals became a necessity instead of a pleasure. At our table the staff engineer, Mr. Botting, gave us expert information regarding the submarine menace, and spoke as if the *Queen Mary* were already on her way to Nova Scotia to be tied up for the duration of hostilities. An American business man made plans by radiogram to return on the same ship. There were covert glances at a professor who had admitted

that he was a chemist in the employ of a munitions firm. It was a daily joke that I had chosen such a time to go back to England for my holiday.

We came into the Channel, and the *Queen Mary* began slouching toward Cherbourg. But there was none of that exquisite thrill of sighting land again. None of the usual jokes about the Scilly Isles. No hysterical excitement as the trunks were rolled into the corridors. No frantic guesswork to identify the steamer on the horizon, no amateur movies of the red-sailed Cornish luggers. Instead, there was an air of Stygian resignation, as if the captain were the Charon of some vast modern ferry that was inexorably making its one-way journey across the dark river to a land of perpetual death.

There were radio telephone calls from the shore. Some salesmen of an American company asked their executive, traveling to London for a conference, if they might book their passages home. Paul Draper, the dancer, was advised by his manager not to leave the ship. Go back. Don't come to London. London will be bombed. Stay in the country. Go back, if you can. It's war.

At Southampton, a familiar England greeted me. A customs official made me pay twelve shillings duty on three pairs of silk stockings for my mother. The train was loaded in the same leisurely way. The hotel men were just as busy seeking their clients' luggage. I saw the same old England from the train. Green fields, bowing trees, dahlia gardens. I sipped the same old English coffee. And then we came to London's suburbs. Over sedate Surbiton floated half a dozen captive balloons—looking like a sausage's nightmare. They were part of London's barrage to protect herself from the warplanes of

Hitler's armada. "Looks like business, doesn't it?" said the man in the next seat.

There were three people to meet me: my mother, Ewart Hodgson, and Arthur Christiansen. They all tried to show they were glad to see me, but it was patent that their minds were wandering.

I drove to my mother's flat. We went along the Embankment. Army trucks passed us. There was an interested crowd gathered round one of the trucks that had stopped by the side of the road. As I came near, I saw the men were erecting an antiaircraft gun. They were digging up the smooth grass of the Green Park to make aircraft shelters. I passed a long, patient queue, lining up to obtain gas masks.

I had not been home half an hour before my mother's doctor, who employed the sister of the Austrian maid at my home, arrived to ask for advice. They were sending all German citizens back to Germany, he said, and he asked if Anna and her sister should not be discharged. People were evacuating London in thousands, according to him, and he had already made arrangements to join up. War was inevitable now, and he thought the girls should be sent on their way before it was too late.

The last time I came home to London I was received at the office like a conquering hero. This time peoples' thoughts were too concentrated on another man who wanted to be a conquering hero. They did their best to be cheerful, but it was hard to work up enthusiasm—even for drinking—when they were darkening the windows as a precaution against air raids, when they were measuring the executives for asbestos suits, when they were painting blue and red arrows to mark the

way to a subterranean cellar, where the *Daily Express's* page one might be made up the night after tomorrow, when the younger members of the staff were already being conscripted for antiaircraft training.

I went home to dinner. It was a gloomy meal. The radio was turned on to full volume. The quiet, serious words of Neville Chamberlain, words that held little promise, were punctuated only by the frequent arrivals of the German maid, who announced she had just heard Hitler speaking on her short wave set.

That evening I spent in the home of some friends. There were two young matrons in the company. They sat on a sofa, getting joylessly drunk. With each highball they became more depressed, instead of more elated. Said one: "We're building a sandbag shelter for the kiddies in the garden." Said the other: "So are we, but what good will it do?"

Next morning it was worse. By proxy I applied for a gas mask, and then I went to luncheon at the Savoy with the general manager, Mr. E. J. Robertson. He left halfway through the meal to rush to the House of Commons, where Mr. Chamberlain was making another speech. A war oration, they expected. An appeal to the people once more to come to the aid of the King and Country.

I returned to the office. I found John Sampson, a former colleague of mine in New York, walking up and down the front office waiting for me. "Come and have a cup of tea," he invited, urgently.

We went to a coffee shop round the corner. Earnestly he told me that, although he had just started an important job in London, he felt he ought to return to New York. His aging

mother was there. She was dependent on him. He must return, before army regulations made it impossible for him to return.

I told him to wait twenty-four hours. Without knowing what I was talking about, I said that I had a feeling it would all blow over. "You go back to your job," I advised, "and I will telephone you later with the inside dope."

We said good-by on the office steps. I went up in the lift to the editorial floor. I walked through the swinging doors and almost ran into J. B. Wilson, the news editor. "Just the man I was looking for," he said. "How about flying to Munich tonight?"

Mr. Robertson walked past. The only time I had seen him as excited was during a crucial Test Match. "Most dramatic moment in history," he stammered. "Chamberlain was just beginning his war oration, and then a piece of paper. Meeting Hitler tomorrow in Munich. No war."

I raced across London to the German Embassy to have my passport visaed. An upright, gray-haired German let me in. "Vunderful news," he said. The vice-consul stamped my passport. He shook my hand warmly and bowed. "It is vunderful, is it not?" he said.

The plane for Munich left at 4 A.M. I did not go to bed. Nor did hardly anyone in London.

Had I not been forced to surrender all but thirty marks, had I not eaten a butterless breakfast, had I not flown over miles of the Black Forest, had I not seen battalions of storm troopers, had I not heard a thousand times "Heil Hitler," I should still have known that I was in Nazi Germany a few

moments after I registered at the Regina Palast Hotel in Munich. On the wall of my room was a notice. In English it carried the following warning: "Guests are advised that the hotel hopes they will have at least one meal in the hotel daily, but breakfast is *compulsory*." Immediately, I pictured myself, detesting breakfast as I do, sitting meekly between two storm troopers while they delightedly watched me retching over a dish of synthetic bacon and eggs.

I did not have time, however, to permit my anger to boil over. Herr Hitler's guests were expected at any moment. I had to hurry away to the airport to await their arrival.

Daladier arrived first. The crowds gave him a cheer, because obviously they had been told that it would be better for them to give him a cheer. Then Chamberlain, grave and tired-looking, stepped out of his airplane. The cheering for him was more spontaneous.

A motorcade set off for the center of the city. It was difficult to tell officials from chauffeurs, and chauffeurs from newspaper reporters, because all of them wore uniforms. The motorcade stopped for a moment. In front of me was a car empty except for a driver in pale green uniform. I jumped in. He gave me that confounded salute and that confounded "Heil Hitler," and followed the procession. The cars which contained the principals turned off down a side street, and my friend at the wheel drove straight on until he was immediately opposite Hitler's palace. There he indicated that I must get out.

I was in a broad avenue guarded by thousands of soldiers, whose uniforms looked as if an apprentice pants presser had been practicing on them. Behind the guards were thousands

of spectators. They all seemed to be shouting at me, and I suddenly thought of a day when I scored a goal for the opposite side during a school football match. I expected that at any moment I would be arrested, blackjacked, or shot. The Nazis were not people to take chances. So, although I had no credentials but a New York police card in my pocket and, although the only German I knew was *auf Wiedersehen*, I walked along the pavement as if I belonged on it. I came to a corner and stayed there.

Presently there was a commotion down the street. In a second or two, Daladier passed in an open car. Then another commotion, and Chamberlain, with his hand resting on his umbrella, passed in another open car. There was a noise like distant thunder. The thunder came nearer. Then the storm broke over my head. It was Hitler.

His car, traveling comparatively slowly, passed my corner. I was within a few feet of the Führer for a second or two, and there was no one between him and me. With a bomb and a good aim, I could have destroyed him utterly. For a moment I was regretful that I had not foreseen this opportunity for immortality. Hitler took no notice of his ovation. He looked petulant and sulky—like a schoolboy who has been told to take off the mustache he has stuck on his upper lip with spirit gum.

There was a long wait. There was a long silence. Then a questioning murmur from the crowds. Where was Mussolini? Mussolini, always a showman, was expecting the crowd to ask just that question. While his name was on everyone's lips he came along. His car went so fast that I had only a glimpse of his perfectly creased aquamarine uniform, of his bursting

chest, of his chin thrust definitely toward the heavens as if in a challenge to God to prove that He was stronger and mightier than the master of modern Rome. Mussolini stole the show.

While they talked in Hitler's palace, I moved around Munich. I went to the Brown House, the Hofbrauhaus, and other landmarks in the history of National Socialism. I talked to people who knew Hitler, admired Hitler, liked Hitler, and adored Hitler. I learned to talk in whispers to those who disliked Hitler. I soon got that feeling all Germany has that there are no four walls which do not have ears.

From a man who professed to know, I had a new insight into Hitler's diplomacy. This man told me that Hitler used the science which ironically had been perfected by his nation's most learned Jews. He surrounded himself with psychologists, said my informant; each psychologist was a specialist. One could foretell exactly how the English temperament would react in certain circumstances. Another could divine the Frenchman's attitude. Another had made a special study of Neville Chamberlain. Another was an expert on President Roosevelt. Hitler never made a move in his international game of chess, said this theorist, without knowing from his psychologists as clearly as possible exactly what effect that move would have.

Mr. Chamberlain missed his luncheon, and I don't suppose he ever knew that the manager of the Regina Palast had put a bottle of Worcester Sauce beside the cold chicken because he had heard that an Englishman had Worcester Sauce with everything he ate. The manager of the Regina Palast had no such thoughtfulness for the rest of the English visitors.

In my Americanized way, I ordered a sandwich for lunch-con. It was a wurst sandwich, the waiter told me. It was well named. There was no butter, of course. All the butter was being used in the manufacture of munitions for the war that the Big Four were then trying to stall. The bread was synthetic. I ate four of the sandwiches and felt as if I had been through a sandstorm. I asked for an orange. The waiter looked surprised. But he brought some. They lay on velvet in a large box, and they were handed me as if they were the crown jewels. They might almost have been the crown jewels. They cost a dollar and a half apiece.

I found I had no clean shirt. I went to the nearest haberdasher, and he showed me the latest line in shirts made from wood pulp. When I felt them, rough and gritty, I suspected that I had discovered where the bread in the sandwiches came from.

Hours slipped by, and in the early morning the Peace of Munich was announced. It was just after dawn that I was awakened from an hour's sleep by the sound of applause. In my pajamas I walked onto the balcony which was right under Chamberlain's quarters. There were several thousand people in the street. They were mostly middle-aged people. Men and women who had been through the last war. They were clapping their hands as people in the gallery do when a theater management delays too long in raising the curtain. Clapping in unison. It was pouring with rain, but they kept on clapping until ten o'clock. By that time the crowd had grown. Among them was the only pretty girl I saw in Germany, a straw blonde in an expensive car. They started to shout. "Shaimberlane. Shaimberlane. Shaimberlane." At last Chamberlain had

to come to his window. I have never heard such cheering in my life. No one can tell me that those people were not glad there was to be no war, or that that demonstration was some more of Dr. Goebbels' artistry.

I left Munich that evening and drove through the foothills of the Austrian Alps to Linz, a small manufacturing town on the border of Ostmark and Czechoslovakia where Hitler learned his bad grammar. Troops that had been ready to march in earnest were waiting there to stage a mock conquest of Sudetenland.

On the way I stopped at Salzburg for dinner. I had, of course, heard a lot about Salzburg. A city of good living. A city of gaiety. A city of music. I looked forward to a pleasant evening.

My driver took me to the largest and best-known café in town. There must have been a thousand people. I ordered a paprika schnitzel. It was delicious. And there was butter. And real bread. Hitler, only recently the bloodless conqueror of Austria, did not yet dare to show his new subjects the real hardships that must be suffered by all good, patriotic Germans. I began to eat and was more at ease than I had been since I arrived in Germany. And then suddenly I realized something. All I could hear in this crowded restaurant was the sound of knife and fork striking plate. No one was talking. I looked round the café. The people were staring stolidly in front of them. They opened their mouths only to eat. They spoke only to order more food. There was not a laugh. There was not even a smile. A city of gaiety!

We drove on through what used to be Austria. Through rich, fertile country. A few kilometers from Linz we passed a

broad, black field. It should have been sprouting wheat, but instead it was sprouting warplanes. Warplanes ready to fly in case there was a hitch in the Peace of Munich. We came to a small town which looked just like a set from a Hollywood war picture. Camouflaged tanks were lined up on its pavements. Our car had to crawl in low gear past a row of army trucks loaded with machine guns.

At two o'clock in the morning Linz looked like any small manufacturing town asleep. There was no sign of its being the G.H.Q. for that sector until we arrived at the Weinzinger Hotel. At the hotel—used in more normal times to buyers and commercial travelers—the high command had established their headquarters. The clank of army boots could be heard all the time on the stone floor of the lobby. The bar was filled with officers, mellowed by a succession of hot toddies made of local red wine. I ordered a whisky and soda. The barmaid, an ample blonde, served it with straws. As soon as the company discovered I was from England, the band was ordered to play "God Save the King," and everyone stood up to salute me.

Zero hour for the bloodless march into Czechoslovakia was two o'clock in the afternoon of Sunday. The border was about twenty miles away, and I set out early in my massive Mercedes. Since dawn, trucks had been trundling over the bridge that spanned the Danube—which was anything but blue—in pursuit of a series of signs chalked along the road to easy victory. Now I followed that same road. In an hour or so I caught up with the fearsome German army.

It all seemed rather silly. Everyone knew that all but Sudeten Czechs had evacuated the borderland within twenty-four

hours of the signing of the Munich Pact, but the army made its preparations with so much earnestness that they might have been about to attack the legions of hell. In spite of reports that the troops would wear only parade uniform to make the "Conquest" seem a little more polite, every soldier had on his steel helmet, camouflaged with twigs and leaves. But then everyone but the local butcher seemed to wear a steel helmet in Germany, so perhaps that *was* the troops' parade uniform. The guns, too, were covered with branches, so that they looked as if they were presents for giant children hanging from a Christmas tree. The tanks, which, to my unpracticed eye, looked second-hand, were painted a drab khaki, relieved only by girls' names like "Paula" and "Else," scribbled in black across their fronts. A strange place for sentiment, the nose of a tank.

I arrived at the border an hour before zero hour. I was hungry, and an officer suggested that I might get some bread and milk at the farmhouse just behind the customs house. The farmer's wife, who bore a close resemblance to one of the witches in Macbeth, gave me a large bowl of milk and a hunk of coarse bread. When I had finished I asked a soldier who could speak a little English to find out how much I owed the old harridan. They had a long conversation in German, and at the end of it the farmer's wife did her best to smile at me, bowed, and raised her hand in salute. "She says there is no charge," explained my interpreter, "because you are English, and the English saved our country."

In about half an hour the army began all over again to kid itself that it was doing something brave. On each side of the border were plowed fields. They were acres in extent, and

yet the only sign of life in all those acres was a small group of farmers and their women. They were hoeing. They reminded me of that hackneyed picture, *The Angelus*. But with great caution a body of scouts arrived ahead of the main army. One of them carried binoculars, and he examined every scrap of the terrain in front of him. Another man went about the business of laying a field telephone. Some more fell on their stomachs in the damp mud and pretended they were hiding from someone. Then the generals arrived. The general commanding took up a position opposite the customs house and lit a long cigar. He looked at his watch. Zero hour. He gave a signal. In a few seconds the mighty army of the Reich set foot in Czechoslovakia. The officers took candid camera shots. Some Germans who pretended to be overjoyed Sudetens gave a cheer. The "Conquest" was complete. It was achieved with the firing of one shot, and that one was fired by accident.

The town of Linz put on a mild celebration that night. With nothing better to do I walked round the square with a fellow journalist. In a grocery store I saw that coffee was four dollars a pound. In a stationer's I saw that the entire window was given over to a display of picture postcards of Adolf Hitler. "Doesn't he look a louse?" I said to my companion. A woman who had been looking in the window shot a suspicious glance at me. We walked away. She followed us. She followed us for the rest of the evening.

A journey through the Alps took us to Innsbruck and the train for Calais. With the Continent's instinct for detecting foreigners, people by the roadside recognized us as English and saluted us. Everywhere we went we were hailed almost as heroes because we belonged to a nation that had stopped

Germany waging another war. Those sentiments again were not inspired by Dr. Goebbels. Dr. Goebbels had not reached those mountain villages. In fact, we stayed overnight in a musical comedy village called Lofar, and the proprietress of the inn did not even know that Mussolini had been at Munich. Those sentiments were inspired by a desire for peace just as strong as England's. There may be thousands in Germany who want war, but there are, I am convinced, millions who want peace.

I arrived back in England, feeling supremely grateful to Mr. Chamberlain and rather proud of him. I was even more grateful when I went home to my mother's apartment. There was a square package waiting for me on the hall table. I tore off the wrappings.

It was my gas mask.

The journey home to America was very different.

Now there was no frantic dash to the *Queen Mary's* tea-dance room every evening to listen to the radio. There was a large attendance at the movies, and little enough room on the dance floor every evening to satisfy a night club. In other words, it was just a routine voyage.

The *Queen Mary* arrived in New York's harbor at five in the morning. Half an hour later there was a knock on my door. It was Dixie Tighe. Almost as soon as greetings were over, she became serious. Rather nervously, she said: "I want to warn you, Tommy. The anti-British feeling here is terrible. The things the papers have been saying are awful."

She brought me some samples. Some of them were pretty bad. "Perfidious Albion," favorite American taunt at England's

statesmen, appeared in every other line. Chamberlain was viciously attacked as a traitor and as a trader. A traitor to democracy. A trader in things which didn't belong to him.

I was not as angry as Dixie had expected. Six years in America had taught me something of the American outlook. They are sentimental people. They will always champion the weakling against the bully. And Czechoslovakia was the weakling, and Hitler the bully.

Americans didn't want a war. In spite of all the talk about no foreign entanglements, she knew full well that she would be in it before a couple of months had passed. When Chamberlain first announced he would fly in the name of peace to Berchtesgaden, his gesture was greeted by the American papers as one of the greatest in history. They must have known then that Chamberlain had only two alternatives in that mission—peace or war. Peace meant appeasement. Stubborn refusal to listen to Hitler's demands meant a war that England wasn't equipped to fight. They knew that when they clapped their hands for Chamberlain. But America is a nation of poker players. They were pretty sure Hitler held a royal flush, but they could not quite give up the hope that he might be bluffing. There was only one way they could see to beat Hitler—to outbluff him. Chamberlain didn't choose to play that risky game when he had only a couple of pairs in his hand. And so America, hating Hitler more than anyone since George III, assailed him.

Basil Rathbone, the actor, has made a pretty point about America's frustrated anger at the Peace of Munich. No one will ever forget, he says, the wild, hysterical celebrating of the Peace of 1918. That was a peace after the worst war in

the world's history. The Peace of 1939 on the other hand was won with no war. Yet it was greeted with wild, hysterical boos. Must the people of America have war, he asks, before they will welcome peace?

Before I had passed my baggage through customs, I was asked to broadcast on my experiences in Europe. The announcer asked me if England's people were solidly behind Chamberlain. "Of course," I said. The announcer was quite surprised, and a little hurt.

The customs official routed out my gas mask. I had declared it as personal belongings, and as such it was not dutiable. But Uncle Sam wanted his fifty-cent duty, and the inspector said it should be classed as a souvenir. "Nonsense," I said. "If an article given to me by my government for my personal protection and safety is a souvenir, well—" A board of appeal argued about my gas mask for fifteen minutes. Finally they announced their decision. In the case of a British citizen, they said, a gas mask certainly was part of his personal belongings.

On the way to the street, a friend who had come to meet me said jocularly: "Well, I guess you'll take out your citizenship papers now." I had by then an Americanized sense of humor. I should have laughed, (just as I laughed at jokes about the Duke of Windsor or Queen Mary's hat.) I knew that Americans don't mean any harm by such remarks. They make much worse jokes about their own institutions, especially their own President. But something had happened to my Americanized sense of humor. With too much bitterness I said "Never."

I was sorry the moment I had said it. It was insular and stupid of me. Much more, it was insincere.

Perhaps I would not have taken out my citizenship papers. That is a difficult step for any Englishman to take. But I make no secret of the fact that I was relieved to be back in America, to be in a country that could look on through the powerful telescope of its press and radio without danger of being hurt, to be upon soil so secure that the customs man really was right in saying that my gas mask was a souvenir.

At that moment, when I said "Never" so vehemently, I think I really had lost my English accent. In my thankfulness for having left behind me a Europe that was spoiled and rotten I was ready to wonder if—when the time came—I would answer the call that every Englishman should leap to answer, the call to King and Country.

•

CHAPTER XVIII

I DON'T THINK I'll take this little number along on the Royal Tour," said Dixie Tighe, handing me a black and white print frock to add to the heap of things not to go.

I remembered the dress well, not so much because it was rather pretty, but more because of a small domestic scene concerning it. It was bought just after the abdication crisis, when they were even making cakes of soap in the slender shape of Mrs. Simpson. Dixie liked the dress for its irregular white pattern. But after she had worn it a couple of times she made an awful discovery. The pretty irregular white pattern spelled over and over again: "Wally... Wally... Wally... Wally..."

"Oh, I think you should take it," I said. "It would look swell at the Royal Garden Party."

Not an inspired remark, by any means, but, as I stuffed my suitcases with enough shirts to survive five weeks without a laundry, it set me thinking again.

I suddenly remembered that, when I was in school, I had knocked a bewildered foreigner's hat off because he did not remove it during the playing of "God Save the King." And I remembered, too, that, just after my arrival in America, I used to jump to my feet when they played "My Country 'Tis of Thee," because I thought that these strange unpredictable for-

eigners among whom I was living had decided all at once to pay tribute to my King. Now, it seemed, I had not only lost most of my reverence; I had also lost some of my respect.

It was understandable, of course. I had been in New York when Edward VIII of Great Britain and Ireland, of the British Dominions Beyond the Seas, King and Emperor of India, became plain Duke of Windsor, and it was impossible for me to inoculate myself completely against the epidemic of sympathy for the man who had been King, (of apathy for the man who became King. Only someone a little hard of hearing could have ignored the daily references to the man he associated with lofty majesty as "Bertie." I was taught, too, by my American newspapers to regard the Queen as a colorless little woman with her self-importance as puffed up as her figure, hopelessly jealous of the Duchess of Kent for her beauty, hopelessly jealous of the Queen Mother for her popularity.) Even my admiration for Queen Mary was not let alone. I was shown how to laugh at her hats, just as heartily as I had to laugh about the Englishman's monocle or his delayed sense of humor.

It was, therefore, with little enthusiasm that I prepared for an assignment I had already decided would be an unrelieved hardship. Eleven thousand miles in a lower berth indeed! At least on the Roosevelt train they had given us a drawing room. I was inclined to sneer with my tailor as he measured me for a cutaway morning coat with the air of someone outfitting an out-of-date costume drama. I laughed out loud when I saw myself in a topper. Completely overlooking in both instances that not so many years before I had worn that uniform every day to school—even on the motorcycle I rode to the station.

Regretfully I said good-by to Matthew's Farm, where the lilacs were in bud, and the dogwood was nearly out, and one tulip had burst itself with pride that the spring sun had chosen to shine upon it. Regretfully I crossed the unguarded border at Rouse's Point and turned my back on the country I now looked upon as home. Regretfully I disembarked on a warm May morning in Montreal.

Canada seemed to share my apathy. Montreal is so French that it has brothels. But Montreal was not French enough—nor British enough either, for that matter—to promise to fight any more wars for the Old Country. And Montreal thought that the King was coming to encourage them to make that promise. So preparations to put on a show for the Royal visitors were made more in a spirit of politeness than of affection.

A man who looked like a gargoyle dressed by a blind tailor was mayor of Montreal. His name was Camillien Houde. French, of course. I think Houde had read about Roosevelt. Anyway, he had organized his own personal W.P.A., which confined its activities to constructing an enormous number of comfort stations. So closely did the citizens of Montreal associate comfort stations with their mayor that they wanted to perpetuate that association. Of course, one way would have been to make him a privy councillor, but they couldn't do that. So instead they changed the local word for comfort station, and substituted *un camillien*. Well, Mayor Houde had been bragging about what *he* was going to tell the King. He was going to say what he had said to the French-Canadians. He was going to say that he, Camillien Houde, had given his personal guarantee that not one of his people would go overseas to fight in a foreign war. The English Canadians re-

sented that, but in a way they were even more listless about the visit than the French. Of course, their ancestry wouldn't let them get too excited about anything. And even the red Indians, who had been counting on increasing their sales of beads and baskets, were squabbling because no one would allow them to put on a show in front of the Great White Father.

It was worse in Quebec. They say that Canada fell to the English when Wolfe captured Quebec. Well, it seemed that Quebec needed capturing again. The French tricolors all over the place and the language almost convinced me that I was in France. I was assured that the people had no emotions for France. But they did have some emotions for fascism, my informants declared. I was told to go down to Basse Ville. It was tough all right. These were hungry, discontented people who lived in the murk that helped Wolfe to bring his soldiers up to the Plains of Abraham to take the French completely by surprise, and they seemed to be perpetually on the watch so that no more English should come into those parts without their knowing about it. I saw two flags in Basse Ville. The rest of the houses were flying dozens of pairs of long underwear that the menfolk had discarded now that summer had arrived.

There were plenty of flags in Upper Town, but even there I found little enthusiasm. There seemed to be memories everywhere of the Duke of Windsor. Pleasant memories, too. In the Citadel, in the hotel, in the hearts of the people. "He was a grand fellow," they said, and there was a little too much emphasis on the "he." The old women who lived next door to the Citadel brought an injunction to stop the army prac-

ticing the royal salute, because each time the cannon fired, their pictures fell off the walls. And one of Lord Tweedsmuir's servants said in answer to my suggestion that he must be thrilled to wait upon the King: "Not particularly, sir. It keeps us very busy, you know, sir."

What with one thing and another the people began to think that the Royal visit was jinxed, especially when the *Empress of Australia* was held up two days in the Atlantic ice. Those of an observant eye had already noticed that the little crowns which indicated the Royal floor on the elevator signals at the Château Frontenac obscured the figure 13. They blamed Sir Dudley North, master of the King's yacht, for the delay. A member of Parliament, in fact, reminded the House of Commons that one man North had already lost England a North American colony, and declared that another seemed bent on losing her another.

My spirits did not rise even when the other reporters arrived.

The English contingent looked such a dull lot. I recognized Ward Price, of the *Daily Mail*, from his monocle. They told me he was one of Hitler's best friends, and that it had made him so conceited they had christened him "Ward Price Glory." But I didn't know any of the others. They stood mournfully around the lobby, and it seemed that they felt half-naked in lounge suits instead of cutaways, as if they had found themselves at a formal banquet wearing swimming trunks. I looked in vain for old "Royalty" Smith, a cheery, entertaining soul who had "covered" members of the Royal Family as long as I could remember. But he was gone. This was a new generation. The reporters attached to Buckingham Palace looked

more like plain-clothes detectives trying not to look like plain-clothes detectives.

One of them wore the Coronation Medal, a decoration obtained for him by a friendly press agent at the Palace. He told me that his office was so impressed with the presentation that they immediately gave him a five-dollar raise.

I was just as disappointed in the Americans. There was none of the prankplaying, wisecracking kind of reporter that I knew in New York. These men were all such little gentlemen. They behaved like small children wearing their first party frock. Most of them spoke impeccable French. I saw only one of the type that was more familiar to me. He wore a green shirt, a green tie, a green suit, and a green hat. He must have had a whole trunkful of similar outfits. At least, I hope he did, because he wore nothing else during the trip. He spoke out of the corner of his mouth. His name was George Dixon. His paper was the *New York Daily News*. His last important assignment was the Stork Derby in Toronto.

Among the American girl reporters I picked out one who might possibly dress up as a chambermaid in order to get a first-hand description of the Queen's bed-linen. She was a blonde who looked as if she was tired of being a blonde. She put a blind faith in her editor. His edicts, commonplaces to us, but to her something more full of wisdom than a saying of Plato, were relayed to us every day in a lisping voice that began every sentence with "my editor theth..."

There was, too, a girl from New York who seemed to have the impression that there was a Hollywood scout watching her all the time. The only thing was that she simply couldn't

make up her mind what part to play—American girl reporter, old-fashioned vamp, spy for the I.R.A., or just a queen. As if she had already been awarded her contract, she made arrangements with a press agent to send out to all the newspapers details of the dresses she was taking on the Royal tour.

With the arrival of so many reporters it was inevitable that the rumors should begin. Just after Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., arrived in his trailer, he telephoned Dixie Tighe excitedly with a report that the ship was being held back deliberately because the Queen was seasick, and seasickness came under the head of *lèse majesté*. Someone countered with a report that the King had hives. That was bettered by a man who declared that the King had been operated on for appendicitis. In one quarter it was even suggested that a Nazi submarine had scared them all back to England.

But at last the *Empress of Australia* came within sight of land. We went miles along the St. Lawrence to take a look at her. In Quebec there was feverish activity among the police. They issued identity cards to the hotel guests, and anyone without a card was turned away. They said it was a precaution connected with the Royal visit, but I think that it was designed to stop Quebec's young ladies of the evening from putting on a sales campaign in the corridors. I mean that for two days my corridor reminded me of Forty-fifth Street between Sixth and Broadway.

On the morning of May 17 the *Empress of Australia* slid into her moorings only a few feet away from the place where a conqueror's foot had stepped on Canadian soil.

There was a good crowd at the pier. There were ample decorations. They had even disguised a latrine which would

have confronted the King as soon as he stepped on Canadian soil—or rather concrete—with bunting and Union Jacks. While the *Empress of Australia* tied up, the morning-coated reporters sent off flashes—"MAJESTIES LANDED." The King, in the uniform of an Admiral of the Fleet, and the Queen, in a dove gray ensemble that turned out to be the uniform of a Queen, appeared on the deck. There was a polite cheer. And then an awkward silence. Canada, unused to Royalty, didn't know what to do next.

The awkwardness remained until the luncheon. The King and Queen were obviously nervous. So were the people of Canada. Two Royal flunkys didn't improve the atmosphere at the luncheon. They took one look at the way the local waiters had set the table, and then with an imperious wave ordered everything done over. With one gesture they expressed the Englishman's contempt for the way people other than Englishmen do things. There was awkwardness when the wives of two highly-placed Canadian government officials arrived in identical hats. There was awkwardness when the King and Queen arrived. There was awkwardness while the King and Queen ate. There was awkwardness when the King and Queen finished eating. There was more awkwardness than ever when the King rose to speak.

And then in a moment all the awkwardness vanished. It happened when everyone realized that the King was homesick. In his speech he mentioned his two children. As he pronounced their names it looked almost as if he were going to break down. The Queen noticed it, and smiled reassuringly. The audience noticed it too. Before the King had recovered himself the people of Canada found themselves confronted

with a great discovery. George VI, King and Emperor, was also a human being.

That incident and others like it made a great impression upon me. By nightfall I had lost all my apathy, and felt almost a true Englishman again. I found myself leaning at great discomfort out of a window so that I could watch the Royal car drive by. The people must have felt the same. No longer polite spectators, they were struggling now to get a good view. Even the American reporters felt something of it. Forgotten were the sly wisecracks they had been practicing on their shirt cuffs. Instead their stories were written in a complimentary vein usually reserved for Abraham Lincoln and cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church. The girl reporter from New York abandoned for the time being her rehearsals for the role of queen and gave her invisible talent scout an excellent rendering of an American girl reporter. And the English correspondents looked as if they were in a perpetual state of almost gaining enough courage to shout "Hip, Hip, Hooray."

Early next morning we boarded the train that was to be our temporary home. From the baggage that was piled into it you would have thought we had taken a year's lease. But only one correspondent had had the foresight to bring two cases of Scotch. The rest of us had not realized that the train was "dry," and that, as a legal holiday preceded us wherever we went, we could never have a chance to buy any liquor. That one correspondent was the only person on the train who never heard an unkind word spoken of him.

Men and women were as carefully segregated as in a public lavatory. They wouldn't let Dixie Tighe sleep closer than two

car lengths from my berth. The rest of us were divided up by nationalities. Naturally I was in the British car. Six of the correspondents didn't speak to me for four days, because we hadn't been formally introduced.

Mounties occupied the car before the diner. The Pullman porter had the saddest face in the world when he walked along the car on the first morning out. There was a pair of knee-high riding boots standing beside every berth, and he didn't know then that the Mounties cleaned their own boots. The women were very thrilled about the Mounties being on the train. The girl reporter from New York gave three performances daily—on the way to breakfast, luncheon, and dinner—of her impersonation of an old-fashioned vamp.

Our first important stop was at Montreal. Montreal that had been so apathetic was now as excited as a sailor in a sorority house. Poor Mayor Houde didn't have a chance to say any of the things he had promised to say. Firstly, he would have been stoned. Secondly, his wife, whom he had recalled from a state of marital disunion for the day, monopolized the conversation.

Ottawa is the sort of place where you never eat olives, because you are not sure what to do with the pits. It was all so formal that Dixie Tighe insisted upon talking about the Union John.

And yet it was in Ottawa that the King and Queen chose the moment to break one of the most hide-bound precedents of English court etiquette.

I was just changing from a morning coat into a more comfortable lounge suit when there was a knock on the door. A bellboy handed me a large white envelope. Inside was an en-

graved white card. It said: "The Governor General has received Their Majesties' commands to invite Mr. C. V. R. Thompson to a reception at Government House." Even King Edward VIII had not dared to do that. The King and Queen were going to hold a press conference!

It was indicated that dress was to be formal. I climbed back into my morning coat. All the English correspondents wore morning coats. The Canadians and the Americans put on dark suits. And George Dixon put on a tie.

Most of them went to Government House in a broken-down bus. I was getting so English that I couldn't quite see going to meet my King in a broken-down bus. So I hired a limousine. When we arrived the staff was distinctly disdainful. They acted as if we were the guests at a butlers' ball. We were herded into a drawing room, and left there. Everyone was very nervous. Everyone wanted to smoke, but no one dared to light a cigarette. There were conferences all over the room. Should we curtsy? Should we wear gloves to shake the Royal hand? Should we say anything to them?

Massively genial Walter Thompson, press officer for the Canadian Government, settled our fears. We should act as we thought we should act.

Then a door opened, and the King and Queen came in. It wasn't at all like a Roosevelt press conference. I mean the King didn't say "Good morning, boys," and the reporters didn't rush—like substitutes racing for glory in an American football game—to surround him. We stood in a fidgety circle round the room, and the King and Queen passed along in front of us. Walter Thompson, who had a memory as long as a mint julep, announced our names. The King and Queen

stopped to talk to people who sounded interesting to them.

The Queen stopped in front of Dixie Tighe. Dixie Tighe removed her gloves. All the other girls removed their gloves. Dixie Tighe curtsied. All the other girls got their feet in a position for a curtsy. Dixie Tighe was asked a lot of questions by the Queen. All the other girls looked daggers.

The Queen paused before a girl reporter from a provincial American newspaper. The poor girl, who looked like a passport picture of Dorothy Gish, was overcome. She blushed and stuttered. She clutched at a dress which would not have been thought daring even in the eighteenth century. As soon as the reception ended she hurried away. We never saw her again.

The press conference was uneventful until the King and Queen reached George Dixon. Dixon had been waiting his turn with some misgivings. He kept putting one shoe on top of the other to try and hide his green and white polo socks. But in the immediate presence of Their Majesties his ebullient self-confidence returned. Walter Thompson's memory betrayed him for the first time, and all he could remember was Dixon's first name. He suddenly realized that he couldn't possibly introduce him to the King as George, and so he stammered: "This is Frank."

Dixon couldn't understand a court etiquette that ordained that you shouldn't speak until spoken to. The only kind of court etiquette he understood was police-court etiquette, and in New York that certainly imposed silence upon no one. So he volunteered to the Queen: "I am the clown of the party."

When the King took his hand Dixon again opened up the conversation. Said he: "You certainly can take it. You're al-

ways in there punching." The King laughed. His laugh seemed to say, "Ah, here's one of those wisecracking American reporters I've heard about." He didn't know—as I knew by then—that George Dixon was a Canadian citizen.

After that meeting in Ottawa the American reporters took up their permanent abode right under the Royal thumb. In their eyes the King and Queen could do no wrong. They grew lonesome for them if we had a long day of traveling. One night, long after their newspapers had gone to bed, they walked two miles along a railway track to watch the Royal Train come in, for they hadn't seen the King and Queen all day.

They wouldn't let us see the meeting between the King and Queen and the Quins in Toronto. They said they wanted to keep it a nice little family party. The Canadians didn't seem to care; they were sick to death of the Quins. But the English and American reporters regarded it as a diplomatic incident. Premier Mitchell Hepburn had to relent. He agreed to allow one man to be present. We selected Walter Thompson, who came out beaming just as roundly as if a doctor had told him that he was himself the proud father of quins.

My colleagues were still not satisfied. They had to see the Quins with their own eyes. So Dr. Allan Roy Dafoe consented to parade the children through the Legislative Chamber, where the flower of Ontario's governing classes had assembled for a more solemn occasion. We stood for two hours waiting for the Quins to arrive. We forgot all about the usual round of city halls and hospitals. We ignored a report that the mayor's wife was mistaken for the Queen and given a Royal Salute. We were not even impressed when a man, in the excitement

of the moment, dropped a perfect curtsy to the Queen. We wanted the Quins.

The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly took charge. He was no longer a speaker; he was a shouter now. Like a barker at Coney Island he built up the show until we were on our toes with excitement.

In a voice that betrayed his emotions he begged the legislators and their wives not to applaud the Quins. "Dr. Dafoe has particularly requested it," he explained. And then the big moment arrived. "Ladeez and gentlemen," barked the Speaker, "you have just seen the Queen of the greatest empire in the world." There was applause. With a gesture that expressed "you ain't seen nothing yet," the Speaker demanded silence. "Now," he continued, "you will see five queens who have won all our hearts." His final words were drowned in more applause, applause which did not subside until a white-coated nurse appeared at the door and led the children through a chamber which had suddenly become as quiet as the opposition benches in the Reichstag. When I left this most entertaining little sideshow I almost paid the usher seventy-five cents from force of habit.

When the train left Toronto and began to crawl through Canada's great prairies, we passed out of the top-hat belt, and our lives became a little less formal. Some of the English correspondents became quite conversational. Michael Burn, of the *London Times*, abandoned his morning coat for a cricket shirt, and wore his gray topper only while he was writing a story. Douglas Williams, still an Englishman in spite of his six years in New York for the *London Daily Telegraph*, produced a picnic basket from his luggage, and brewed his

own tea over an alcohol stove. The staid representative of the *New York Times* began practicing balancing a half-empty highball glass on his bald spot. Even Ward Price was sometimes seen without his monocle.

By the time we reached Banff, a resort in the Canadian Rockies, which, I am sure, is called the Mecca of all mountain lovers, we needed the rest we had been promised.

At Banff we lived under the same roof—it didn't matter that there was five acres of it—as the King and Queen and their suite. That presented an excellent opportunity for what the Rotarians call a get-together. The Canadian government invited correspondents and members of the suite to dine. The affair was not a sensational success. To begin with the girl reporter from New York, who hadn't yet had a chance to display her sensational wardrobe to the photographers, insisted on wearing an evening dress topped with an ermine cloak, although the orders had said it was strictly informal. George Dixon kept on calling the dignified Surgeon Captain H. White, the Royal medical adviser, "Doc." And the members of the suite misinterpreted the phrase get-together. I mean they got together with each other. It ended rather dolefully with a broadcasting man leading the whole company in community singing.

Dixie Tighe and I decided to retire to the room the management had suspiciously consented that we share. We were standing by the elevator. Dixie Tighe was just starting to give me the curtsy she had now adopted as part of her daily routine when we heard a discreet cough. We turned round. The Queen, smiling the smile that always reminded me of spring sunshine on deep blue water, was standing there look-

ing as if she were trying to find someone to talk to. In a few moments the King joined her.

While Dixie Tighe and the Queen compared notes on the trains the King talked to me. There was no trace of his much-publicized stutter. In a few moments I found that not only was he a human being, but also that he had a sense of humor. With some delight he told me how his barber, a heavy man, had fallen from his upper berth on top of the Queen's hairdresser, who was sleeping in the berth below. With surprising candor he discussed the funnier aspects of the journey.

"It is certainly a pleasure, Your Majesty," I said, after a while, "to read of your visit on the front pages of the newspapers, instead of the less pleasant news from Europe that we are more accustomed to."

The King immediately became serious. He explained what he thought about the European situation, about Hitler, about the United States, about the future. He proved to me that the King of England is in fact no figurehead sculptured from emotionless timber no matter what he is in theory. He proved to me that he loved his country just as fondly as any of his subjects. He proved to me that he had a very keen perception of what was going on inside and out of it.

By this time there was a crowd of other correspondents around. On the fringe I saw the familiar green suit of George Dixon. With the agility of a jockey he soon reached the front. "Listen, Your Majesty," he began. It was such an unusual form of approach that both the King and Queen turned to face him. "Listen, Your Majesty," said Dixon, "I've a message for you from a guy in Moose Jaw. He says he was your batman during the War." Grinning, the King asked the



*"Listen, Your Majesty, I have a message for you from a guy in
Moose Jaw."*

man's name. "What the hell's a batman, anyway?," asked Dixon. As soon as he'd said it, he looked at the Queen, grabbed his mouth, and mumbled an apology. "Never mind," said the Queen, "it's out now."

Dixon took that as encouragement. While the Queen was talking he stabbed at her with his forefinger. "Listen," he said again, "you missed all the fun in Moose Jaw. You should have been there three hours after you left. The whole town got cockeyed. Everyone was stinking. Listen, you don't know what you missed."

The King was laughing uproariously. The Queen looked at Dixie Tighe, and Dixie Tighe told me that she divined by a woman's instinct that the Queen wanted someone to get her away. An Englishman, trying to be helpful, said: "Weren't you on your way to the lift, ma'am?" The American reporters tried to push Dixon away. I felt sorry for them; they had been so careful to avoid giving the impression they felt everyone expected of them. I kept repeating as loudly as I dared: "Your Majesty, he's not an American—he's a Canadian."

At last the King moved away from the crowd, and walked into the waiting elevator. The Queen followed him. Waving and smiling, they said good night. There was silence for a few moments, and then everyone turned on poor Dixon. The whole train sent him to Coventry. But the Dixon ebullience was not something to be crushed or resisted. In a few days there was the usual crowd around him laughing at his wisecracks.

Most of the correspondents had put on weight. The only exercise we got on the train was walking to the Post Office, which was in the baggage car right next to the engine. So

most of us tried to get some exercise in Banff. Some went riding. Some went walking. Webb Miller, the author of *I Found No Peace*, went swimming in the hot springs. But he found no peace swimming. He was standing at the side of the pool to adjust the borrowed trunks that were much too large for him when he saw the King and Queen come in. He blushed, and gathered his trunks around him. For a moment he couldn't think where to go. Then he had an inspiration. He dived into the middle of the pool, and stayed there until the Royal couple left.

We missed the Pilot Train at Banff because we stayed behind at the hotel watching the Queen inspect the staff. We had to catch up with it, or fall hopelessly behind schedule. In cars and busses we raced the train through the Rockies. We just missed it at lovely Lake Louise, and so we had to go on across the Great Divide. We dropped seven thousand feet in eight minutes. I didn't see the Great Divide. I was much too concerned with a great divide of my own, the divide of my stomach from the rest of my body.

By this time Michael Burn had become the mascot of the Pilot Train. Young, tousleheaded, gay, and in the habit of breaking into a Serge Lifar dance in the middle of a station platform, he did not tie up with my memory of the *London Times*, a newspaper so insularly British that, when a storm prevented Channel steamers from sailing, it ran the story under the headline "CONTINENT ISOLATED." All the Americans loved Michael Burn, although half of them could not understand what he said. His accent was so "veddy, veddy Briddish"—as Walter Winchell would say—that I had to act as interpreter between him and the American reporters.

He became more cheerful as we came nearer to Victoria, British Columbia. Everyone had told him that Victoria was more British than the British. Michael Burn could hardly wait to be understood again. The first thing he did when he got into his hotel room was to ask the telephone operator to get him the laundry. He got Lord Eldon.

I wish the King had visited the place I went to in Victoria. It was called Fairbridge Farm School. They take unwanted children from the slums of England, and turn them into good citizens for Canada. There were two hundred of them at the school. They were all having high tea when I arrived. I sat down with them. I have never seen such happy children in my life. But they hadn't always been happy.

There was a little girl aged eight. She had come there from the slums of London two years before. When she arrived she looked with wonderment at the trees and the fields and the animals. When she had taken them all in she turned to the superintendent, and asked where the streets were. "There are no streets here," said the superintendent. The child burst into tears. "Well, where can I play, then?" she sobbed.

On the way back east I learned a little geography lesson. Glamis (pronounced Glahmz), where the Queen spent her childhood, used to be the most overpopulated metropolis in the world. From within its walls came half the population of Canada, and all of them—while they tilled the soil or felled the giants of the forest or fished the streams—dreamed of the days when they used to romp the playgrounds of Glamis with the little Scottish girl who grew up to become Queen of England. At least, that was the impression I got from all the people who met the Queen on the round trip across Canada.

Of course, the Queen had to be able to recall each one of them. At one town someone reminded her of their meeting in Delhi, India, and the Queen said: "Oh, yes. Of course." But *we* knew she had never been to Delhi, India.

In a small prairie town on the way home a woman who was presented to the Queen nearly fainted from the excitement. "Oh I'm so nervous about meeting you," she said. The Queen smiled that smile of hers. "Yes, I know," she said. "I used to feel like that myself once."

It was easy to tell we were approaching the United States. One of the correspondents began to receive urgent inquiries from the World's Fair's Grover Whalen, the worst-best-dressed man in New York, pleading for inside information on what suiting the King would wear for his tour of the World of Tomorrow. From women who had been scratching each other to get an invitation to Lady Lindsay's garden party in Washington George Dixon received sheafs of telegrams asking him—as he knew the King so well—if he would put in a word for them. Scotland Yard's representative, tall, baldish Albert Canning (what a name for a cop!), was getting jittery over his nightmares of Irish bombs, gangsters' bullets, and torn up telephone books, all of which he seemed to think were the ingredients for New York confetti. And the girl reporter from New York was getting so, so patronizing.

It was a hot day when we reached the Canadian city of Niagara. Everyone was nervous. Albert Canning was chasing after a mad Irishman who was supposed to have taken up a stand with two shotguns on the railway tracks leading into the United States. The local police wouldn't even honor our

portmanteaux of credentials, but Dixie Tighe managed to get by them by pointing meaningly at a fifty-cent brooch in the form of a crown. The girl with the lisp was so overcome by it all that when another girl told her she had a ticket to cross the Falls in a barrel she went off to poor Walter Thompson, and asked bitterly why she had been left out.

There had been lots of editorials in the newspapers about the unguarded border of the United States and Canada. A border which for a hundred years hadn't seen a bayonet or a rifle. Well, it saw plenty of bayonets and rifles now. I began seeing soldiers as soon as our train reached the American end of the bridge. They lined the tracks. They guarded the roads. They even stood on the roofs of the railway buildings. For five miles there was a soldier wherever I looked.

It was the same at the station, where Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, was to welcome the King into the United States territory. In place of a handful of Mounties there was an army of cops, bullets sprouting from their bellies. They jostled us and pushed us. I just managed to see Cordell Hull's white head during the welcoming ceremony by standing on top of a chair.

Our train that had been so quiet and so orderly seemed suddenly to have gone into the subway business. We who had been allowed to pass without let and hindrance were herded and steered. Secret Service men plied us with questions. Walter Thompson, for whom we felt an affection even warmer than before, subsided into a chair, and the State Department's Michael MacDermott took over.

After I had been given a new set of badges, and a new lot of armbands, and a new collection of identification cards, I

took my favorite after-dinner walk to the Post Office. It had always been something like a walk in the country. There were three baggage cars before you got to the Post Office, and the dining car's staff always kept their supplies in there. There were heaps of fish, and bunches of vegetables all over the place, and it always reminded me vaguely of a rural market. The Post Office was rural too. There were two postmasters, and, like mailmen in the deep country, they were always ready for a chat about the weather or the King and Queen or politics. I found that the heaps of fish and vegetables were still there. But when I arrived at the Post Office the familiar scene had changed. There were two tough-looking fellows in the window where my friendly postmasters had been. And on a table were laid four ugly guns. I thought there had been a highway robbery; but they explained it was just one of Mr. Farley's rules.

No one on the train wanted to go to the Garden Party—until they discovered that all the dowagers in Washington were fighting for invitations. Then we put on just as good a fight as anyone. All the girls wanted to go, because they thought it was a feminine function. The men disagreed. Ed Angly, of the *New York Herald-Tribune*, who suggested—naturally perhaps—that the invitations should be allocated alphabetically, braved a woman's scorn by saying that the time had come for us to decide if the girls were reporters or ladies. The controversy was settled by drawing names from a hat. It was appropriate that a top hat was chosen. Such are the strange twists of fortune that George Dixon was one of the few representatives of the American Press to draw a ticket.

They took us down to Washington at eighty miles an hour.

It wasn't that Washington was so anxious to see us. The authorities thought there would be less danger traveling at high speed. Our train, used to a steady thirty-five miles an hour in Canada, couldn't stand it. One of the cars developed a "hot box." The accident delayed us an hour or more, and the Royal Train was miles ahead of us. We raced it to get into Washington first, but it had too much of a head start. And so not one of us saw the historic meeting between King and President in Washington's station.

There were a lot of people in Washington. Everyone said the visit was a great success. But in a garden not fifty yards off the procession route I saw a little Negro child playing. "Aren't you going to see the King?" I asked him. "What King?" he replied.

I didn't go to the Garden Party. It was too hot to wear morning clothes, and if you wore a linen suit you were liable to be mistaken for a Congressman or a Secret Service agent. Dixie Tighe told me I didn't miss much. Only the King saying "Finders keepers" when a man, taking his hand out of his pocket to shake hands, spilled all his money on the ground. And the woman who tried to get the King's autograph. And Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt's get-up.

I was surprised that Mrs. Roosevelt kept so calm about everything. I mean there was so much going on behind the scenes. There was Marian Anderson, for instance. I suppose Mrs. Roosevelt was rather pleased with herself for thinking of inviting the singer the D.A.R. had turned down to sing before the King. But when she consulted the woman she had championed about her program she found that Marian Anderson had no intention of singing any Negro spirituals—which

was the main excuse for her being on the program. So determined was she to sing something a bit more classical that she had left all her Negro music at home. After a lot of arguing Mrs. Roosevelt persuaded her to change her mind. But there were anxious moments while the music was being flown down from New York.

And then there was the cowboy singer. Just before he was due to go on, a wire arrived from his mother. It told the authorities that the boy was not only a communist but also a little weak in the head. Chief Constable Canning was hysterical. The boy must be locked up, he said. Mrs. Roosevelt went to work on him. Finally, he agreed the boy could sing if he was watched closely and frisked before he walked out to the concert platform. They frisked him so much that the boy could sing nothing but tremolo.

I won the pool for tickets to the Congressional reception for the King and Queen, and I was delighted. I had looked forward to watching how the legislators who had so often attacked the Royal visit would behave when they met the King and Queen face to face. They behaved just as I expected they would behave. Before the King and Queen arrived they were like the overgrown schoolboys that all legislators seem to be. Vice-President John Nance Garner was demonstrating his version of a curtsy. Representative Sol Bloom, conspicuous in spite of his size because he wore a topper, was being ragged by Congressmen while he tried to tell them what to do. "You are not to shake their hands," ordered Bloom, "and you are not to talk to them."

Well, the King and Queen arrived. There was loud applause. Senator William E. Borah walked past, aloof but po-

lite like a lion who had suddenly found himself in a bird cage. Then a Senator broke the rules and put out his hand. They all put out their hands after that. Then someone called the Queen "Cousin Elizabeth." After that they all tried to say something. Even Senator Robert Reynolds, who had attacked the King, the Queen, the British Empire, the President, almost everyone save himself and God (and I don't think he saw much difference between the last two), was seen running down the corridors to get there in time. When I telephoned his office to check if he was present, his secretary said: "Very much so."

There were some holdouts. Congressman Martin L. Sweeney sent his regrets in a telegram, and a request that the King drop off a check at the U.S. Treasury on account of the war debt. But most of them enjoyed themselves. Their applause as the King and Queen left the Capitol rattled around the rotunda until it reached the dome, where it flattened itself against an allegorical painting of the figure of American Liberty squashing the figure of Kingly Power.

For twenty-four hours the King and Queen were allowed to discover that America was not populated entirely by Roosevelts. They were let loose on New York. The King and Queen wanted to see New York. They wanted to see Fifth Avenue and Broadway. They wanted to climb the Empire State Building. They wanted to go into a New York apartment house. They wanted to see the New York that I knew. But the police wouldn't hear of it. They had to be whisked through at high speed—until the King himself ordered them to go more slowly so that they might be seen by the crowds—and taken straight to the World's Fair and Grover Whalen,

who by now had discovered that the King would be wearing morning clothes.

The King and Queen were very impressed with the police of New York. They sent many of them pairs of cuff-links. They didn't see the police as we saw them.

We arrived too late to see the landing at the Battery. It had been carefully arranged that we who were aboard a coast-guard cutter would precede the destroyer from Red Bank, New Jersey, to the Battery. But the destroyer suddenly decided to go full speed, which was seventeen knots. We went full speed which was twelve knots. So the King and Queen had left the Battery by the time we were passing the Statue of Liberty. The police had sent our cars—empty, of course—to the World's Fair long before we landed. We had to follow democratically by subway.

At the World's Fair the police would have no nonsense. They wouldn't even honor the scores of passes and badges we had been given by the State Department. They nearly arrested Walter Thompson, who had been selected by popular vote to represent the entire press at the luncheon. They nearly arrested Michael MacDermott, of the State Department, until he rumbled about and found a G-man's badge. It nearly caused a riot when one of the press cars knocked a policeman over. It was so upsetting to the girl with a lisp that she declaimed to a few thousand people "It hath thpoilt the rhythm of my thtory."

It was a relief to reach Hyde Park, where F.D.R. becomes R.F.D. But not for long. Mrs. Roosevelt and the question of hot dogs or no hot dogs kept us too busy. There were several press conferences on the subject of hot dogs, as if they formed

part of a trade pact or an international problem. At one conference it was solemnly announced that they were going to be served. At the other it had been decided they would not be served. But they were served.

The Pilot Train correspondents weren't invited to the picnic. I suppose Mrs. Roosevelt wanted to keep the story exclusive for her column. But we were given the bare but official announcement that the King and Queen had eaten the American delicacy that turns a snob into a damned good fellow. The members of the Royal Suite objected to its being put that way. "We would prefer," they said, "that you write that the King and Queen attended a picnic at which hot dogs were served."

Some correspondents reported they didn't eat them, but I had it on unimpeachable authority, as the diplomatic correspondents say, that they did. An official of the Treasury Department cooked them and brought them round. "How do I take them?" asked the King, not sure whether to use his fork or his fingers. "Just spear them," said the official of the Treasury Department. The reporters attached to Buckingham Palace couldn't believe it when they were told the King drank beer. A whisky-and-soda, yes. But beer, never. They didn't send the story.

There was a last press conference. Michael MacDermott, doing his best for us, gave out two little items. There was a loud shout from the correspondents. Yelled they: "That was in Mrs. Roosevelt's column two days ago." MacDermott just laughed.

That evening we left Hyde Park. The King stood on the back platform watching the Roosevelts wave. He was biting

his thumb, as if perplexed that a country existed where a President could be so informal. I think he was surprised that Mr. Roosevelt didn't call out "don't forget to write."

Later we crossed the border into Canada again. A great peace came over us all.

"Well, I'll be damned," said Dixie Tighe, handing me a black and white frock to add to the heap of things to go to the cleaner's.

The dress had been one she had worn a lot during the Royal tour. She was angry because she had just noticed that its irregular black and white print spelled over and over again: "Fair...Fair...Fair..."

I was reminded of a similar scene, of another dress, of a dress that had "Wally" written all over it. I was reminded of the thoughts I had had at the time we discovered that other dress. And so I began thinking again....

The last weeks of my journey with the King and Queen were still fresh.

My memory needed no jogging to recall Their Majesties' farewell.

They received us on board the *Empress of Britain*. A Canadian newspaperwoman, Nancy Pyper, who had received most of her training in an art theater, was so impressed with the drama of the occasion that she delivered a speech which would have done credit to Dusé. "Majesty," she said to the Queen, "I have never known one person to bring so much happiness to so many people." The Queen bowed gracefully. The King took Mrs. Pyper's hand. "Thank you," he said, "for saying such nice things about my wife." Mrs. Pyper was so

excited she told everyone about it—everyone, that is, except the chief correspondent for whom she was working.

It was not yet time for me to say my final good-by. I had to hurry along the dock, and board a policeboat to board the cruiser *Southampton* for Newfoundland. I soon discovered why they call the British Navy the silent service. They just don't talk to strangers. It wasn't until the misty darkness hid the *Empress of Britain* from us that they allowed Michael Burn and me to emerge from a small hutch of armored steel that had been dignified with the title of aft control cabin. It wasn't until after they had had several drinks that the officers decided to talk to us. Michael Burn was more popular than I, because the *Times* is the Navy's paper, and because the *Daily Express* had led the campaign against releasing the *Repulse* from pressing active duty with the Home Fleet to bring the King and Queen to Canada.

But I moved into first place next evening, because Michael Burn committed the unpardonable sin of talking in mess before grace had been said. We ended the voyage equally unpopular. We both liked an occasional whiff of the sea air. Every time we went on deck a sailor came chasing down from the bridge, saying: "Excuse me, sir, but Commander asks will you please leave the deck. We are dressing ship, and you have no caps."

They say that Newfoundland was England's first outpost of Empire. Now it is England's outhouse of Empire. It was drizzling when we anchored in Conception Bay. The place looked like an overexposed photograph of Bermuda. It was mid-June, but the daffodils were only just coming out. They told me that more than 80 per cent of the population lived

on a dole of six cents a day. It puzzled me why they bothered to live at all.

Newfoundland is ruled by a dictatorship. They gave up representative government in the last decade because they couldn't pay the interest on the loan that was floated to finance a regiment for the World War. The people expected business men to govern them, business men who could revive their slumping codfish industries. But Whitehall sent them retired civil servants from India.

I had been told that the people of Newfoundland were profoundly loyal. That was confirmed for me when I met a group of Girl Guides who had sold dandelions at four cents a pound until they had their railroad fares to meet the King and Queen. I had been told that the people of Newfoundland were too poor to put on a good show. That was denied for me when, on the drive to St. John's, we passed through a village cruelly named Paradise. Though every citizen of Paradise was on the dole they had refused government aid in putting up an arch of triumph for the royal procession. Instead they went into the forests and cut their own timber, and searched among the ruins of a dismantled building to find their nails.

In St. John's they tried to put on a different kind of show. The men went in hock to buy themselves top hats and cutaways that they would never wear again. The six dictators who formed the government put on a garden party with funds that would have bought a rare dish of meat for some of the people of Newfoundland. The King and Queen seemed to size up the situation. In the middle of the party they deserted the top hats and cutaways, and walked to the railings of Government House. It was a long time before they returned from

the cheering crowds on the wrong side of the railings to the cream puffs and toasted scones in the main marquee.)

We were late for the departure from Portugal Cove. Our car raced along the narrow dusty road at a perilous rate. At last we could make no further progress. There were so many cars that we had to park a mile and a half from the Cove. Michael Burn said he was going to run for it. I said I would stay in the car. A blending of feelings wouldn't permit me to make such a demonstration—my innate English hatred of betraying my emotions and my cultivated American abhorrence of being too reverent. I heard the sirens blowing. I heard a beaten but uplifted people cheering. I got out of the car, and ran, puffing and blowing, over the rough stones just in time to join in cheering the white, almost ghostly ship sliding away into the mists.

We returned to the mainland in a little freighter from Liverpool. All the passengers gathered in the smokeroom to listen to the broadcast of London's welcome for its returning monarch and his consort. The Guards' band played "God Save the King." A crippled man grabbed his canes and struggled painfully to his feet. Had there been anyone who had remained seated I would have pulled him to his feet just as I knocked that bewildered foreigner's hat off long ago in England....

And now I was back in America. I was facing realities again. Hitler, who, with a politeness that didn't suit him, had stopped promoting crises during the King's absence, had started his propaganda factories working double shift. There was a crisis from another quarter in the Far East. They were

assailing Chamberlain again. They were talking again about the decline and fall of the British Empire.

As I tossed the "Fair" dress into the heap in the corner of the room I thought of all these things, and examined myself in the light of them. Yes, I was changed. I was Americanized all right. I was no longer painfully shy, no longer ridiculously reserved, no longer dully placid. I liked New York, and I did not want to return to London. I enjoyed Americans, and most visiting Englishmen infuriated me. But I knew then those two simple, honest people, a man and a woman who worked hard because they believed that their work was achieving something for the land they loved, had taught me one lesson. I knew then that never again would I deny myself to England—whether she were rising or whether she were declining and falling. I knew then that I would always be an Englishman.

In other words, I realized that, although I was no longer a typical Englishman, although I frankly preferred the tang of New York to the more subtle flavor of London, although I said "swell" more often than "divine," and "guy" more often than "chap," I still had not entirely lost my English accent.



117 455

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

